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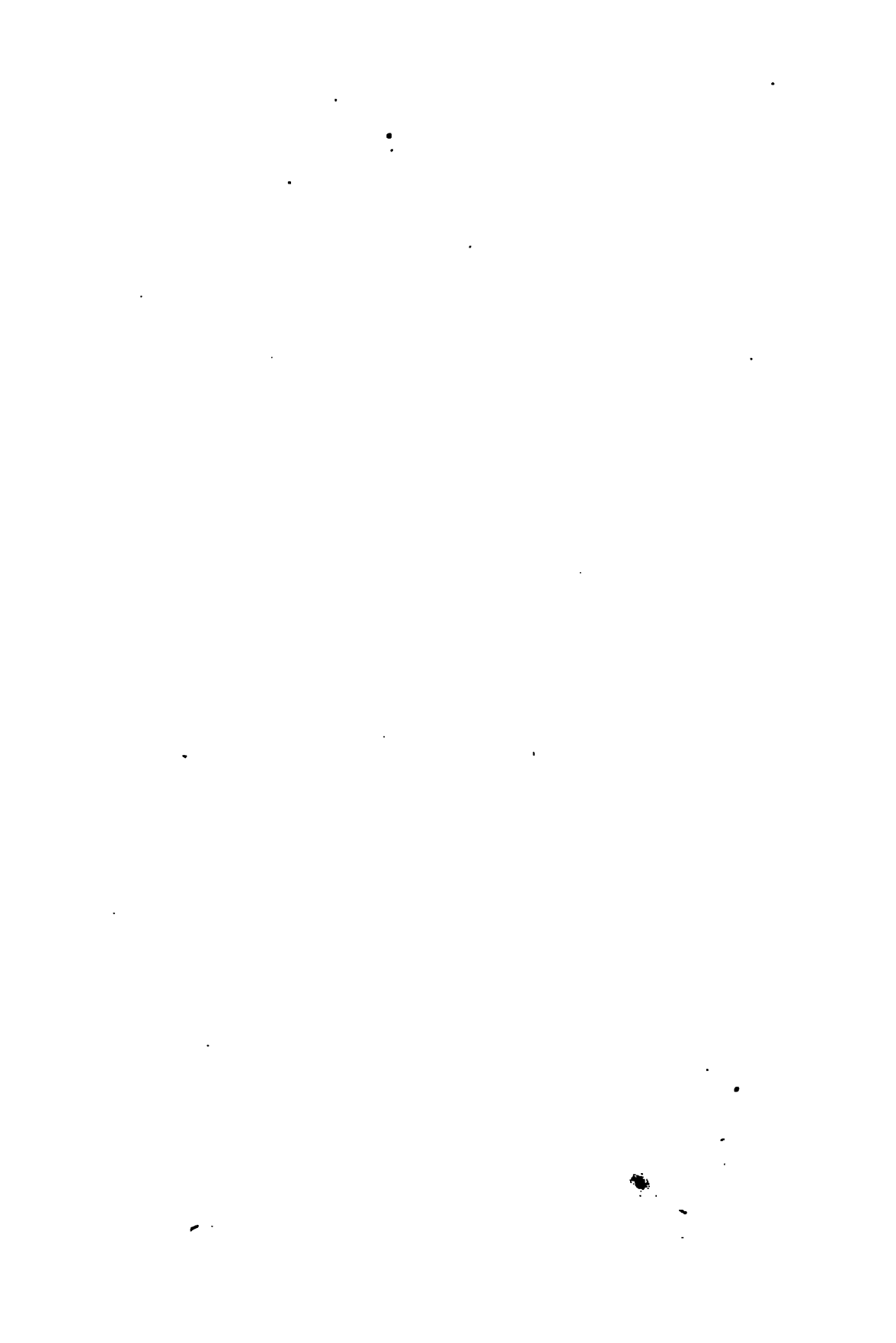


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RATIONAL RELIGION

EXAMINED:

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A.H. 1826

RATIONAL RELIGION

EXAMINED :

OR,

REMARKS ON THE PRETENSIONS

OF

UNITARIANISM ;

ESPECIALLY AS COMPARED WITH THOSE SYSTEMS
WHICH PROFESSEDLY DISCARD

REASON.

BY THE

REV. BADEN POWELL, M.A. F.R.S.

OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Οὔτε ἡ γνώσις ἀνευ πίστεως, οὐδ' ἡ πίστις ἀνευ γνώσεως.

CLEM. ALEX. STROM. L. 5. p. 544.

Hæretici sunt qui supra Scripturam sapiunt.—IRENÆUS, L. 5. c. 17.



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“ PROFITENTUR hoc omnes hæretici et eis quos illectant *rationem* se de rebus obscurissimis pollicentur reddituros : eoque Catholicam Ecclesiam criminantur, quod illis qui ad eam veniunt præcipitur ut *credant* : se autem non jugum *credendi* imponere, sed *docendi* fontem aperire gloriantur. *Sed non ita est.* Hoc enim faciunt nullo robore præditi, sed ut aliquam concilient multitudinem *nomine rationis.*” Aug. de util. credendi. c. 9.



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1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the existence of a solution of the system of equations (1) for arbitrary values of the parameters α and β . It is shown that the system has a solution for arbitrary values of the parameters α and β if and only if the condition

$$\alpha + \beta = 1 \quad (2)$$

is satisfied. If this condition is not satisfied, the system has no solution.

2. In the second part of the paper we consider the case when

$$\alpha = \beta = 1/2$$

and show that the system has a solution for arbitrary values of the parameters α and β if and only if the condition

$$\alpha + \beta = 1 \quad (3)$$

is satisfied. If this condition is not satisfied, the system has no solution.

3. In the third part of the paper we consider the case when

$$\alpha = \beta = 1/2$$

and show that the system has a solution for arbitrary values of the parameters α and β if and only if the condition

$$\alpha + \beta = 1 \quad (4)$$

is satisfied. If this condition is not satisfied, the system has no solution.

4. In the fourth part of the paper we consider the case when

$$\alpha = \beta = 1/2$$

and show that the system has a solution for arbitrary values of the parameters α and β if and only if the condition

INTRODUCTION.

THERE are perhaps scarcely any words in our language which have been used in a greater variety of different and almost contrary significations, than the words "reason" and "religion." When we consider the vast variety of discordant systems which have been equally designated as systems of reason and philosophy, and the not less diversified forms of belief and of infatuation, which have received the name of Religion, and professed to be grounded on faith, we shall not be surprised at perceiving how often, from a similarity of name, things in themselves most essentially distinct, have been confused together; for not only has the same name been applied to systems agreeing in principle and object, though differing in their form and detail; but to systems differing, nay, even entirely opposed to each other in their very first and fundamental principles. Hence the variety of disputes and differences which have arisen as to the proper limits between reason and faith; and the question how

far the one is to be under the dominion of the other.

Some have imagined reason and religion to be essentially hostile to each other, and have hence disowned any connexion between them. Others have sought to form an union of the two, but in very different, and often mistaken ways. Both parties, in upholding their respective systems, have often misapprehended the nature either of reason or religion, or both; and from similarity of name, have taken for the one, or for the other, something which was in reality quite different in its nature. From such misconceptions it has doubtless arisen, that one party have wished to discard reason altogether, in reference to religious belief, and to found such belief on some entirely different principle, whilst another school has unduly elevated reason to the depression of faith. Nor is it surprising that such misapprehension should exist, when we consider that, under the pretended sanction of reason, there have been unquestionably broached many systems, really at variance with religion, and dangerous to its stability; and when, on the other hand, we recollect that, under the name of religion, there have prevailed opinions and practices setting all principles of reason and common sense at defiance.

As to the sort of connexion, then, which ought to subsist between reason and religion, a diver-

sity of opinion prevails. By some, abstract philosophical principles are assumed, and in accordance with these the whole system of religion is viewed and examined. Others descend more into the details, and contemplate every particular doctrine of religion, and every extraordinary statement in its records, as if they were so many propositions in science. And in thus contemplating and examining them, they too generally overlook, or are ignorant of, some of the most obvious and necessary rules of reasonable inquiry. Thus abstract theories, deduced upon what are termed rational principles, have been taken as the rule by which the reasonableness of all religious doctrines is to be decided upon,—a most fallacious and unphilosophical principle when applied to any subject, and doubly dangerous when adopted in the inquiry after religious truth.

Though the authority and evidence of revelation have afforded matter for controversy, yet these questions are distinct from those now alluded to, respecting the reasonableness of particular doctrines. These involve the consideration of what fundamental principles can be assumed *a priori* on the subjects to which those doctrines relate; for it is precisely on this question that the exercise of reason (after the admission of evidence) is called forth. In other words, when we talk of

principles of reason, with which faith is said to be consistent or inconsistent, what is the precise meaning we attach to the term?

It is to an examination of wherein principles of reason may be properly understood to consist, in reference to the ground-work of religious belief in general, and of some of its most important doctrines in particular, that the remarks comprised in the following pages are directed. To inquire on what ground the literal reception of Scripture can be considered as opposed to any real principles of reason: how far the plan of proceeding to judge of the reasonableness and interpret the meaning of Scripture doctrines, by their accordance with assumed theories, is sanctioned by any sound rules of philosophy: and what sort of views of the Scripture doctrine real principles of reason would lead us to adopt.

At the present day, to urge upon those who, in outward profession, are attached to, or even merely respect our Church, the real nature of a rational faith, as contradistinguished from the empty pretensions to that distinction which are so frequently and ignorantly assumed, cannot but be deemed seasonable. If actual Socinianism is openly and positively professed but by a comparatively small body, yet kindred *principles* are, it will be allowed, much more prevalent. It is much to be feared that a spirit differing in

nothing from that of Unitarianism, as to arrogance of pretension, narrowness of conception, and deficiency of reasoning, extends its influence but too widely, in leading men astray from the truth. It is hardly to be doubted, that a very large portion of the middling and upper classes of society receive an education such as to give them some insight into the results of philosophy, without thoroughly grounding them in its true principles: such as to give them a superficial acquaintance with the labors of others, without qualifying them to follow up any very profound investigations themselves: such, in short, as to give them a conceit of their own superiority as to the acquisition of rational principles and the adoption of enlarged views, without really putting them in possession of the one, or qualifying them to take the other.

Considering the very general operation of such causes, it is not to be wondered at, that a fallacious sort of sophistry should be equally prevalent, which makes its disciples believe that they are framing the most truly reasonable systems, when they are, in fact, merely being carried away by an ill-regulated imagination. And it is unfortunately but too commonly the case, that a man sits down to reduce his religious belief to what he considers rational principles, in pure ignorance of *what rational principles are*, or of wherein a rational belief ought to consist.

RATIONAL RELIGION

EXAMINED:

ſc.

propagated its tenets to a surprising extent. We cannot shut our eyes to the great increase of this most insinuating system at the present day in our own country; nor can we deny the powerful and widely ramified influence which it exercises over the minds of its votaries. Hence it has not been deemed a matter of trifling importance, by several distinguished supporters of the Church of England, to watch the progress and oppose the encroachments of this pernicious system in the present times; and in a view of rational religion, so remarkable an instance of the degradation of reason, under the yoke of servile superstition, could hardly pass unnoticed. Thus on both grounds occasion has been taken to animadvert upon its tendency and principles, in connexion with the several topics of discussion.

In thus endeavouring to contribute towards the defence of the truth, the Author is well aware that at the present day originality of argument or illustration is little to be expected. All the principal topics have been from time to time, as occasion required, the subjects of powerful and masterly discussion to the champions of the truth. Yet merely to draw attention to the state of the argument, is an object of no inconsiderable importance: and even if the case be urged without any great novelty of reasoning, the attempt may often be attended with useful consequences.

With respect to the originality of many parti-

cular ideas and arguments in the following inquiry, the Author is most ready to acknowledge that if it exist, it will probably be found more in the manner of putting them than in the invention of the topics themselves. The ideas here enlarged upon are in a great measure those suggested by the remarks of standard writers. The doctrine of the use of reason in general, in connexion with faith, as defined by Locke, and more fully treated of by Mr. John Norris, and in parts of the writings of Hooker, Bishop Stillingfleet, Dr. Edwards, &c. has in some degree afforded the ground-work. Bishop Butler's arguments on the antecedent probability of mysteries in a Divine revelation, must form the basis of all just views of the subject. The masterly dissection of Unitarianism, by Archbishop Magee, has from its professedly *critical* nature supplied several topics of further examination, as to the question of *reasonableness*. But principally the comparison instituted between the Unitarians on the one hand and the Papists and Fanatics on the other, by Bishop Van Mildert, in his Bampton Lectures, and the numerous remarks relative to the history and principles of *rationalism* (in its extended sense) in his Boyle Lectures, have afforded the main design, in conformity with which the present remarks have been put together. And in the discussion and comparison of the tenets of each party on particular points of doctrine, ample use

has been made of the labours of Hooker, Chillingworth, Lavington, Edwards, &c. Another work may also be named here, as in a high degree illustrative of the subject,—the very interesting recent publication of Mr. Rose, on the Protestantism of Germany : this, and other sources of information, will be referred to more particularly in the sequel.

It may be proper to remark, that the various authorities adduced in the notes will doubtless be familiar to the theological reader: they are introduced chiefly for the sake of those whose means of research may not have been very extended, and will perhaps tend to put the argument in a more conclusive light, by exhibiting, in a collective point of view, a few of the most striking facts and characteristic testimonies, than could be done by any attempt at more elaborate reasoning.

The reader may possibly here and there recognize passages which may have met his eye before in certain articles of a periodical work; he should therefore be apprized that those articles were written by the same Author.

OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT.

(SECTION I.)

GENERAL principles of rational inquiry after religious truth.

Natural theology, and revelation *in general*, admitted by the opponents. Question as to the particular rule of doctrine.

Comparison of different grounds of faith.

I. Belief founded on Revelation.

- 1. On Scripture simply; this the rule adhered to by the Church of England.**
- 2. On Scripture joined with some other authority.**

(1) Apostolic tradition : Church of Rome : insufficient and unreasonable.

(2) Internal illumination : Fanaticism : irrational and uncertain.

H. Belief founded on authority distinct from Revelation : pretended principles of Reason : the Unitarian ground of Faith : irrational and unphilosophical.

Comparative View.

Progress of illumination.

ON RATIONAL BELIEF IN PARTICULAR DOCTRINES.

(SECTION II.)

Ist. Doctrines concerning the Divine Nature.

I. Rational principles of inquiry into these doctrines, deduced from considering,

1. What knowledge we have antecedently to Revelation :

Our knowledge certain, but very limited. No ground for argument *à priori*.

2. Thus coming to Scripture we can only deduce the literal doctrine.

This doctrine a collective statement of various particulars. How they are to be reconciled not attempted to be made out.

II. Examination of the views of different parties.

1. The Unitarian: rejects the literal

doctrine, and substitutes another theory.

On what proof? 1. None from natural religion. 2. None from Scripture. Internal evidence:—this theory as mysterious as the literal doctrine.

2. The Romanist.

1. Scholastic refinements:

Arian councils:

2. Pictures of the Deity.

3. The Fanatic.

All truths made into mysteries:

Irreverent familiarity.

Comparative View.

Similarity of mental and external idolatry:

Humility of simple faith—practical tendency.

(SECTION III.)

II. Doctrines concerning the Divine dispensations in respect to our spiritual state.

I. Rational principles of inquiry deduced from observing,

1. Our limited knowledge previous to revelation of,

1. The Divine Attributes,
2. and, designs : and
3. Our moral relations.

2. Coming to Scripture, necessity of cautious inquiry and literal reception.

II. Examination of other systems.

1st. The Unitarian scheme.

1. Their hypothesis devoid of direct proof.
2. The only remaining ground, its greater simplicity: this an insufficient proof, if true : but,
3. This system not really more simple: it involves many incomprehensible doctrines: instances of these in,

The existence of evil :

Providence, prescience, &c.

The principle of morality :

The miracles of the New Testament.

A future state : remedial punishments.

The nature of the human soul.

- 2dly. Comparison of the Unitarian with the other systems : equally unreasonable with these.

The principal doctrines in effect perverted
by the Romanist and Fanatic as much as
by the Socinian :—Original Sin : Con-
demnation : Redemption : Atonement :
Justification : and Sanctification : &c.

Equally bad practical tendency.

**CONCLUSION : General Remarks and Compa-
risons.**

Chapter

SECTION I.

ON A RATIONAL GROUND OF FAITH IN GENERAL: COMPARISON OF
SEVERAL SYSTEMS AS TO THEIR PRINCIPLE.

§ 1. The powers of human intellect in regard to physical investigation :—

2. Its weakness in regard to moral and divine truth. Necessity of humility.

3. Natural theology assumed. Revelation *in general* admitted by the opponents. The question,—as to the particular depository, the reception, and the sense of revelation.

4. Several grounds of belief. I. Revelation alone. And this, 1st, as found solely in the volume of Scripture.

5. Principles of rational interpretation : to be guided by considering the state of man. Previous knowledge by light of nature very vague and confined.

6. Propriety in general of cautious *inductive* enquiry on obscure subjects.

7. Application to this enquiry.

8. Literal sense of revelation to be taken.

9. Revealed doctrines reasonable if they involve no absolute contradiction.

10. Difficulties and obscurities do not amount to contradictions.

11. Conclusion. Admission of revelation—literal interpretation.

12. This the doctrine of the Church of England.

13. A second ground of belief; Scripture conjointly with some other authority.

14. Of this kind, (1) the Romish traditions.

15. Want of evidence.

16. Standard indefinite: doctrines contradictory.

17. (2) Internal illumination by grace.

18. This fanatical principle equally unreasonable with the last. No certain ground of belief;

19. II. The principle of reason set up as equal to revelation.

20. The false pretensions to reason.

21. The principle so called deficient in evidence—vague and indefinite.

22. Comparison of this with former grounds of belief—all equally objectionable—preference of literal reception of Scripture.

23. Mutilation of Scripture actual, or virtual; common to each.

24. Gradual progress of illumination referred to by rationalists. Their system supposed to be a purification of Christianity from superstitious errors. This not the way of purifying it—but to

recur to the fountain head in Scripture. They pretend to complete what the Reformation began.

25. This not true in history—the same pretensions in the early heresies.

26. The same pretensions made by the Puritans and fanatics.

27. The Romanists accuse the Reformation of leading to these consequences: and charge us with departing from the *literal* sense of Scripture. In this also the Socinians triumph.

28. Instanced in transubstantiation—but in fact we do not here give up the principle—this doctrine is not the *literal* doctrine of Scripture.

29. For pure Christianity we must refer solely to Scripture.

In order to proceed to the particular object professedly in view in the following inquiry, it will be necessary, in the first place, to enter upon considerations of a more general nature. In order to investigate the reasonableness of any particular system of doctrines, it will be necessary in the first instance to examine in general the foundation on which religious belief is built. To inquire into the degree of information upon these subjects, to which the mind of man is capable of attaining; and thus to deduce some rules or principles by which we may judge of the reasonableness of the grounds of belief. This will afford a sort of introduction to the better contemplation of the articles of faith in their detail. After having examined the reasonableness of the primary principle and standard of belief, we may be able more satisfactorily to compare the pretensions to reasonableness in particular systems of doctrine.

To examine the question, then, as to the different *foundations* upon which belief may be built, is the design in the first or introductory part of this inquiry.

(1). The structure of the universe around us affords the most inexhaustible subjects of contemplation and wonder; but not the least wonderful part of the whole is man, who thus surveys it. The intellectual powers with which he

is endowed are truly astonishing; but this is only in some particular cases, and when applied to some particular subjects. The mind can soar above the low spot to which the body is confined: it can traverse the most distant regions of the universe, and accompany the remotest planets in their course; it can determine their motions, and calculate with the most unerring certainty their distances and magnitudes; it can penetrate through the extent of space, illuminated on its way by the clearest light of demonstration, and proceed with the most unshaken confidence and security to trace the ways of nature through all the expanse of her immensity. Yet even here, in the examination of the natural world, we are compelled in many cases to acknowledge our ignorance and incompetency. When we reflect upon the vast extent of the dominions of nature yet unexplored, and the limited sort of knowledge we possess of that part within our scope, our ignorance of the ultimate essence of matter, or the physical principle of the forces acting upon it, we cannot but deduce a lesson of intellectual humility.

(2). But when, from these topics of research, we turn to the inquiry after metaphysical, moral, and divine truth, the incapacity of our intellectual powers is more strikingly displayed. The moment our mind turns inward upon itself, and seeks to inquire into its own nature—its connexion with the body—our origin, our obliga-

tions, or our end—we immediately feel lost and confounded at perceiving the unfathomable abyss with which we are on all sides surrounded. In the contemplation, then, of those things which are most properly the subjects of our investigations, and in which we can attain to the greatest degree of light, we are compelled to acknowledge ourselves surrounded on all sides by wonders, and unable to explore even the dominions of material nature in their full extent.

If we go but a few steps beyond the limits of physical investigation, we discover only enough to teach us that there are wonders and mysteries much further removed from our apprehensions, but not to explain to us their nature. We are forced to admit that there is an order of things altogether different beyond the regions of physical things, and which it still further surpasses our powers to investigate or comprehend.

(3.) It forms no part of the present design to enter upon the arguments of Natural Theology. The inquiry in which we are engaged presupposes the admission of these primary doctrines. Those who are concerned in the present discussion are persons professing a belief in those truths which the united voice of nature so loudly proclaims: to which the natural feeling of mankind has always borne testimony: and which the reasoning portion of mankind has confirmed by the accumulation of most irresistible proofs. Nor

here again have we any occasion to discuss the particular evidence offered in proof of revelation; either as to its antecedent probability, or to its actual promulgation.

The whole of the present inquiry is concerned only with those who do not *professedly* reject revelation. I set out, therefore, by assuming, as a point conceded by those with whom I am to reason, that the Deity not only may but does vouchsafe to make known his will to his creatures; that not only is such a revelation probable but proved—not only reasonable in expectation, but true in fact. The question at issue is, *where is the precise record and depositary of this revelation? In what manner is it to be received and understood? By what principles are we to proceed in examining and interpreting its purport? In what sense are we to regard its declarations?* These are points of inquiry on which what are termed rational principles are brought to bear: and disputes have arisen as to the *right of reason to be the supreme arbiter* in such questions, when the real point to be examined ought to have been, *wherein does the proper exercise of reason on these subjects consist?*

I. We have first to inquire into the defined depositary, and the rational interpretation of a system of belief founded on a divine revelation as its sole basis.

(4) 1. In what precise record and depositary we are to find the body of religious truth commu-

nicated by such a revelation becomes an important question, and on which several different opinions have been maintained. We will first examine that ground of faith which is found in receiving the volume of Scripture as the only rule and standard of divine truth. Having acknowledged the reasonableness of looking for a revelation, the direct evidence of miracle and prophecy applies to the attestation of the divine origin of the volume of Scripture. It would be almost superfluous to remark, did it not seem to be sometimes overlooked, that if the admission of these arguments and testimonies be rational, then is the belief in Scripture rational belief.

(5.) But when we speak of a reception of Scripture we may speak with some variety of signification. In what particular point of view, then, are the contents of Scripture to be regarded? and to what extent are they to be implicitly received? In order to answer such questions we must briefly contemplate the condition of the inquirer. We must regard the object he has in view in his inquiries; and the degree of knowledge he is capable of acquiring for himself: this last will be little more than considering the extent and compass of human ignorance.

The very idea of a revelation implies the communication of knowledge otherwise unattainable. The information thus given may relate either to

subjects wholly new to our apprehensions, or consist in an enlargement upon some ideas we previously possessed. In either case the slightest consideration must suffice to shew, that we cannot come to the inquiry possessed of any principles on which we can judge of the doctrines to be presented to us *by any general views.*

In respect to those points of religious truth on which it would be most necessary for us to obtain information, reason fails in giving us more than the most vague and imperfect ideas. If, then, we conceive such information an object of any importance, it is clear we must apply for it elsewhere ; but, as in this instance, we fail in arriving at the *ultimate principle* of the truths concerning which we inquire, so neither does the book of revelation give us any other than most partial representations, though considerably more clear and accurate than those we had before attained to. Even here we do not, and in fact cannot arrive, at the ultimate principle. Neither the essential nature of the Divinity, nor the ulterior object of his dispensations, are at all laid open to us ; and they would in themselves necessarily be subjects far beyond our capacities to comprehend.

(6.) On these grounds, then, let us briefly consider what ought to be the course pursued by a person who, in a rational and truly philosophic spirit, is inquiring after truth.

It is, in the first place, most evident, that there is a very wide distinction to be made between the nature of different subjects upon which our inquiries may be exercised; the distinction, namely, between those subjects in which we can attain to the *ultimate principle*, and those in which we cannot. Of the former class we have an instance in geometry; where, in examining the relations of angles and figures, we set out with a perfect knowledge of the whole essence and principle of those things which are the subjects of discourse: a line or a triangle has no other nature or being; there is nothing further of its nature to be learnt than what is described in the definition of it. It has its existence solely by virtue of that definition; it has no independent existence; it is purely the creature of our intellect. Setting out from this definition, therefore, we may proceed to shew that it will have such and such properties, and that such or such assertions respecting it will involve contradictions.

Of the other sort of subjects we have instances in all the other branches of our knowledge which relate to real things or beings. Of these we know not the ultimate nature. We may define the terms which we use to describe them; but such terms only comprise the ideas of some of their properties. We know that they have an existence quite independent of our definition of them. If we keep to strict and accurate reason-

ing, on the model of geometrical investigation, we may here, as before, follow up many trains of inquiry, by proceeding from the definition in a path of regular inference. But these conclusions will only apply to the subject as involved in its definition; and we shall be able to perceive what is contradictory or not, only in reference to these particular properties which we have deduced from the definition. With respect to any further parts of the nature of the thing we can infer nothing: we, in fact, know not the ultimate principle, and therefore we must be content with such knowledge of the subjects as we may be able to deduce partially; and from such knowledge we can only ascend towards the higher principle, by gradual induction from a number of particulars. Between such particular truths there may often appear a great incongruity; they may be such as we have no means of reconciling with each other, or reducing to any common principle. We must, then, rest satisfied with the bare statement of them as they appear; but this will not constitute any real difficulty or objection to the reception of them upon the evidence of experimental inquiry. If we were in possession of the general principle we could then decide upon the reasonableness or contradictory character of any particular alleged truth; but if we are not in possession of that principle, and have only a knowledge of the subject within cer-

tain narrow limits, we cannot judge whether a given assertion involves any thing contradictory or unreasonable, except just so far as it may contradict some part of that small portion of the truth with which we are acquainted, and our knowledge of that portion of truth can only be satisfactorily derived from an extended and cautious investigation of the whole body of facts, so far as laid open to our search, taking no part of it as standing alone, but as connected with and qualified by all the rest.

In any subject of inquiry the truth cannot be considered as fully stated, till all apparent exceptions are also alleged. If we know the ulterior principle, then we may perhaps reduce those exceptions to their proper place, and regard them as in fact all parts of one greater system. But if we have not this knowledge, the utmost we can do is carefully to state those exceptions, as modifying the general truth; and though we do not pretend to understand how they are to be reconciled to each other, yet still we do not think that a reason for overlooking the apparent difficulty, or endeavouring to explain it away by artful subtleties and fanciful refinements.

If only a few unconnected parts of some great system are made known to us, we cannot with any sort of propriety, or even the appearance of reasonableness, enter upon any speculative discussion concerning it. We cannot judge of it by

any general views, or theorize upon the subject so as to arrive at the general principle ; or upon such abstract principle, reduce the parts, according to their actual relations, into harmonious order. The only way by which we can proceed, in any accordance with a philosophic spirit, is to endeavour to trace any such relation as may appear to subsist between some few of the facts, and thus to classify and enumerate them all, carefully noting all such as seem to have any appearance of contradiction to others of the same class, so that they may be remembered as exceptions ; and that any such general truth as we may deduce from the one set of facts, may be understood as qualified by that derived from the other. All that we have to do is to examine the evidence upon which our insulated facts depend ; and if the evidence be sufficient, the only case when we can admit a fallacy, will be when those facts obviously contradict what is already positively established.

Such are precisely the principles upon which Bacon laid the foundation, and Newton and his successors reared the superstructure of physical truth. And it is upon no other principles than these (modified of course according to the nature of the subject), that the search after religious truth is to be conducted, if we would make that search on reasonable principles ; and upon these reasonable principles I now contend for the

necessity of a cautious adherence to the literal doctrine of the Bible (supposing all along that its external evidences are found satisfactory,) in preference to any hypothetical method of explaining away all its peculiarities, so as to reduce its contents to what we vainly conceive will be agreeable to reason. This, if it were so, would in fact make us suppose that God had given a revelation of his word to teach men only what they could as well discover for themselves.

(7.) To apply these remarks ;—let us suppose a person to be in search after religious truth, in a candid and philosophical spirit : he examines the works of nature and the structure of the universe, he thence feels the necessity of admitting those great and leading truths which constitute natural theology ; but his search does not stop here, he confesses how very small a part of Divine Knowledge he has thus attained, and he looks abroad with a docile spirit and an enlarged contemplation, to see whether he can discern any further and clearer indications which may lead him to an extension of his knowledge, and lay open new views of those things into which he is enquiring ; he perceives the striking phenomena of miracles and prophecy : his inductive caution obliges him to give them an unprejudiced examination, and not to let the apparent novelty or unaccountable character of these phenomena offer any obstacle to his admission of them, if he find

the evidence sufficient. If he be satisfied on the ground of testimony, the principles of rational enquiry oblige him thus far to enlarge and modify the views of divine truth, which he had before taken up, by adding to his confession of the manifestations of the Supreme Being in constituting the natural world, the admission of these further manifestations in its moral government.

But his researches will not terminate here, nor end in any such mere general acknowledgment as this: he will now, in the same enlightened and candid frame of mind, look into the volume of revelation; he will take an enlarged and comprehensive view of its contents; he will perceive the necessity and propriety of not attempting to judge, *à priori*, as to what it will be reasonable to believe or not to believe concerning the great subjects there treated of, except just so far as in reference to the few leading truths which he has deduced from the testimony of natural reason: he will feel the propriety of leaving the sacred volume to speak its own language, and of not attempting to confine its representations in the narrow track of any theories previously laid down.

(8.) On the general principles which would hold good in the enquiry after truth of any kind, such ought to be the mode of proceeding in the enquiry after religious truth. And such a mode of collecting the doctrine of religion is surely the

only one which is consistent with the reverence naturally and necessarily due to revelation. Every particle of a divine communication is to be carefully treasured up, every assertion is to be respected; and whether it seem to us of great or small importance, whether it seem congruous or incongruous, satisfactory or unsatisfactory, is by no means to be overlooked, and on no ground or occasion whatever either to be rejected or explained away to suit our preconceived notions. Such must necessarily be the proper mode of proceeding, if we admit that the revelation is from God; it then becomes us to value and revere it, though we know not its compass and extent; it then is our duty to receive it as to all points of the divine will and counsels declared in it, though we know but in a small part what that will and those counsels are.

(9.) Upon such truly reasonable principles, when we come to examine the contents of revelation, the mode of proceeding must be this: we confess ourselves in ignorance of the Divine nature, attributes, counsels, and dispensations. We form our only definite notions of them from what the Scriptures declare; if we attend only to certain parts of Scripture unconnected with the rest, we might deduce partial views which might involve little difficulty, or at least we might fancy them to do so. If we now extend our view to other parts, we find statements,

which, to a superficial enquirer, appear at variance with the former; but when we recollect that our views of truth are not to be founded on partial statements, we learn to view these apparent contradictions in their true light, and to remember that our first view had given us only an imperfect notion of the doctrine: the deficiency was to be made up, and the notion improved into a nearer approach to the truth, not by believing a doctrine involving contradictions, but by receiving these apparent exceptions as in fact *parts* of the rule: as being particulars essential to the full statement of the truth: which consists neither in the one doctrine alone nor in the other alone; but in the one understood so as to be modified by, and reconciled to the other. By this procedure the real nature of any Scripture doctrine is to be elicited: and when we state it in terms which might be considered to be at variance, we remember that in so doing we are only carefully stating all the particulars of which it is made up.

This is the mode of investigating and stating the truth which must upon all sound principles of cautious enquiry, be entitled to the designation of the most reasonable, and most suitable, both to our capacities, and the subject which we enquire into.

And it is to an enquiry into the reasonableness of certain doctrinal statements deduced from

Scripture, that we have to apply this mode of proceeding. To enquire whether certain views of the nature of the Deity, of his dealings with us, and of the condition in which we stand with respect to Him, are such as involve any thing contrary to reason; that is to say, whether they represent his nature and dispensations, as at variance with the little we know by the light of nature concerning Him and His attributes, or at variance with other dispensations, similarly made known to us.

(10.) But if the doctrine so propounded do not necessarily involve any such contradictions as these, it will follow that there is no reasonable ground for rejecting it.

For let us take the most extreme case, and suppose that the doctrine proposed, asserted something concerning the Divine nature or attributes, which should involve the greatest difficulty to our conceptions, not at direct variance with any thing we already know of that nature or those attributes; let this difficulty arise from some relation asserted, which is of a nature utterly beyond our powers to comprehend, still it does not amount to a contradiction: for a contradiction can only subsist between two assertions, the terms of which stand for ideas which are definite: in fact it is here precisely that the observation applies which was first made, viz. that on subjects where we know not the ultimate principle,

no assertion can involve a contradiction, unless it be one ascribing some quality or property to the subject, which is at variance with some other quality or property which we are previously assured it possesses. Any such assurance which we can have respecting the Deity or his counsels antecedently to revelation, it is almost superfluous to observe, must be of the most limited description possible. Conclusions which are true of things finite, will not necessarily be true of things infinite : the axioms of common sense will not apply beyond the objects of common sense. We are not required to believe contradictions ; but then there are many things of which we have not a sufficient comprehension to be able to say whether contradiction exists or not. To believe things contradictory to our senses, is very different from believing things contradictory only to our imagination : to admit physical impossibilities, is widely distinct from admitting what is above our powers to understand. Physical impossibilities can be shewn to exist only in things whose nature we comprehend. Divine mysteries exist only in things whose nature we cannot comprehend.

We may then come to the Bible seeking for information : but we cannot come bringing any information with us. We cannot even say that we are furnished with any principles on which we can form an idea of the sort of information we may expect to derive from revelation ; much

less can we pretend to set out on any such previously established principles to judge of the contents of revelation, or to take any general views of its doctrines. We confess our ignorance and our inability to explore the vast regions with which we are surrounded; we require a guide—and a guide is graciously vouchsafed us. We can therefore only follow the track he points out, with an entire reliance and confidence in its being the right path.

(11.) Revelation discloses to us in part the stupendous scenes of another world; but man is too apt to set up, in opposition to these representations, vain and empty notions, derived from the things of this world: it is from preconceived theory alone that any contradiction in these things can be found; and to frame such theories is the work of *imagination*, and *not of reason*. It is *fancy*, and *not reason*, which is opposed to the reception of revealed mysteries. Reason, in fact, requires the submission of a wilful imagination to the doctrines of religion. There is no imposition of a belief in contradictions upon the understanding: there is nothing at variance with common sense. Our assent is required to revealed mysteries, because common sense tells us that on such subjects we must expect mysteries. Reason itself teaches us that such things must be above reason.

If then revelation presents to us difficulties

and obscurities, true reason would dispose us to receive them with a reverential adoration: and the more mysterious the doctrines may be, the more is extreme care requisite, lest, in matters we so little understand, we be led into presumptuous perversion or rejection of truths, involving our highest interests.

In respect to the belief in religion in general, without adverting to particular doctrines, such considerations will suffice as laying down the fundamental principle upon which a rational belief in revelation is to be built; and as shewing the reasonableness of a literal reception of Scripture, as the basis of religion. We thus define the particular depositary and source of truth; and the simple rules by which our interpretation is to be reasonably guided. We find that a rational belief is to be taken up upon the authority of attested revelation: we find the definite record and standard of truth in the literal, collective declarations of the particular volume so attested: we recognize the rule of rational interpretation to consist simply in avoiding such a sense as shall be at absolute variance with itself, or with some equally asserted and evidenced truth.

(12.) And such is the ground of faith and the rule of doctrine professed by the Church of England. She receives no other rule of faith than the Scriptures; and maintains that the Sacred Volume contains every thing which can be re-

quisite to be believed or practised in order to obtain everlasting salvation ; whilst she expressly disavows the authority of any other principle and ground of religion whatever.

The Scripture, and the Scripture alone, is admitted to be the standard and depositary of the truth : and precisely what is to be understood by Scripture is yet further defined by the limitation of a simple and obvious rule of interpretation : that the plain and literal sense of the sacred writers in matters of doctrine, is that which can alone be safely adopted. This is, in fact, the rule implied in every sentence of the Articles and other doctrinal declarations of the Church. And not less so is that equally necessary caution of not building upon insulated expressions and single detached passages. The faith of the Church of England is a system exhibiting the very model of caution and discrimination : her doctrines are deduced only upon an enlarged and accurate examination of the whole extent of revelation : every part and every expression has been weighed and deliberated upon : every apparent difficulty or contradiction has been taken into account : every opening which might seem to be made to any general principle has been critically scrutinized ; and no fallacious theory permitted to pass as an article of faith. The examination has been exact and rigid : nothing conjectural, nothing uncertain, or ambiguous, in the slightest degree.

has been suffered to obtain the title of an authorized doctrine: the whole subject has been viewed in all its bearings, and no partial or limited views have been considered sufficient: all that is dark, obscure, and mysterious, has been brought forward, and confessed and admitted to be so: there has been no shrinking from difficulties; no attempt to smooth down incongruities; no wish to explain away what might seem harsh, by unfounded refinements. The doctrines of the Church are founded on the substantial basis of the collected and accumulated testimony of revelation: collected and accumulated, weighed and scrutinized, by the diligence and judgement of the fathers and luminaries of the Christian Church, for a long succession of ages; up to those who had ocular proof of the divine origin of the revelation.

(13.) 2. But we have now to examine another ground of faith professed by one class of our opponents, and which, while, in common with that already examined, it rests upon the authority of some sort of revelation, differs from it, as to the particular depositary and source of truth.

The sort of revelation upon which both systems are alike grounded is this; that revelation, namely, which was made by direct communication, either from the mouth of the divine teacher Jesus Christ, or from the teaching of his apostles and others, who were divinely inspired. Thus

far both systems agree in their principles. But the question then naturally occurs, how is it to be ascertained precisely who were inspired persons, and where is the depositary of those doctrines which constituted the system of truth delivered by Christ and his inspired followers? In the age of the Apostles, and even of their immediate successors, there was little difficulty in fixing on these points. When the evangelists committed to writing the account of our Lord's ministry, and the apostles, the doctrine which they had taught to their converts, it was an easy matter in those times to ascertain with the utmost certainty that nothing was received as the genuine account, either of the one or the other, which was not in reality so. To collect and preserve such a depositary of doctrines, was the province of the early fathers and guides of the Church: they could do it with precision and certainty, and the collective testimony of the whole body of the Church could be called forth to their assistance. In those ages also it was a matter of no difficulty to settle how far the gift of inspiration extended; and to determine by a reference to the simple and obvious test of miraculous powers, whether the doctrine taught by any given individual, was to be honoured or not as a part of the divine revelation. But, again, to whatever period the power of working miracles might be continued, it would not necessarily follow that

they were given for the purpose of evidencing any fresh additions to be made to the body of divine truth. They were subservient to the propagation of the truth, when the system was complete, as well as to *authenticating* the origin of any particular truth: hence, though the power of working miracles might be continued, it soon became evident that no accession of new truths, or further developement of those already made known, took place. And when this was found to be the case, it became the duty of the guardians of the Church to keep a vigilant eye upon all novel opinions, and even upon the doctrines maintained on the basis of the received truths. There was now evidently no necessity for expecting further accessions of divine light: and the canon of revelation being so far fixed, it was not lightly to be extended to the admission of any new writings: and if at such a period the power of miracles had visibly declined, it might have been taken as an express token and argument that the communication was now closed, and the measure of divine knowledge to be imparted, filled up. Thus might a certain rule of faith, sure in its evidence, and definite in its character, be afforded to the universal Church throughout all ages.

(14.) But the formation of the Canon of Scripture, it is urged, was a work of time: differences of opinion for a time existed, as to the admission

of some books. The successors of the Apostles received peculiar powers by immediate communication from them—the precise period of the cessation of miracles is undetermined. Might there not be an authority residing in the persons of these guardians of the Church, and of the truth continued to them and their successors; and evidenced by a continuation of miraculous powers, such powers being perhaps more displayed at some particular periods, and comparatively obscured at others? Might there not thus be a sort of “*lex non scripta*,” a traditional authority, of which the successors to the apostolic office should in all ages be the depository, an authority which might be supplementary to the written Canon, and competent to decide upon questions of faith? Such were the notions which, after a time, became prevalent in the Church. The charge of Christ to St. Peter was referred to as an evident authority, and the powers were considered vested in the supposed successor of St. Peter, in the apostolic chair of Rome.

(15.) 1. Such, then, is another system of faith, built indeed upon revelation like the former, but differing in regard to the particular depository of revealed truth; and though, esteeming the Scripture in its literal acceptation to be one part of that depository, yet finding another part in some other authority admitted conjointly with Scripture.

We have now to consider this ground of faith, received in the Church of Rome, as consisting in Scripture and tradition jointly, and to examine whether upon the principles laid down it can constitute a reasonable ground of faith; and on this point a very few observations will suffice.

First, with respect to evidence: this has been laid down as the primary requisite for a rational faith in revelation. What, then, is the evidence adduced in support of this supplementary species of revelation, this authoritative apostolic tradition? It is replied, that this evidence is found in the power of miracles given to the Church, and which it has continued to display through a long succession of ages.

The question of the miracles of the Romish Church has been so repeatedly and convincingly argued, that it would here be superfluous to enter much upon the subject. The following, however, are one or two considerations worth recollection, when we compare these miracles with those so differently and so fully authenticated as wrought by our Lord and his Apostles.

The Romish miracles are rarely alleged to have been wrought by persons on the spot at the time, and by a word or a prayer. They are generally of a kind wrought by some image, relic, or unseen agent; or effected by the sanctity of some particular spot or building. In this way many have been alleged to have been wrought,

without the direct agency of any gifted individual who might be said to work the miracle. Others again, if wrought by the agency of an individual, were wrought not on persons present at the time, but at a distance. These circumstances, and many others which might be mentioned, leave open considerable room for suspicion. And, in other cases, where the effects were not produced at one given moment, or at the utterance of a word, or were of a nature capable of being brought about by mental or corporeal excitement, the really supernatural character of the result is yet more open to doubt.

But what I wish chiefly to observe is, that in all these, and many other particulars, these miracles are essentially distinguished from the miracles of Scripture. These last were always and exclusively wrought by some commissioned person, in direct reference to the object of his mission. They were always performed by an inspired teacher, and for the purpose of attesting his inspiration.

The miracles pretended to by the Church of Rome were not of this character; and not being wrought by commissioned individuals, they could be no evidence of any individual possessing the privilege or function of being the depository of revealed truth. To prove this it would have been necessary that every Pope and every Council should have wrought a miracle before they pro-

mulgated their decrees : thus, even if the alleged miracles were really wrought, they would be no proof of a divine commission vested in the Pope, or any body of individuals.

(16.) The Romish traditions, then, cannot form a rational ground of faith, being deficient in evidence.

In giving a positive definite rule of faith, again they are defective. The authority of articles of faith is thus made to depend on the declarations of individuals, with whose diversity of judgment, ability, caprice, or worse motives, variations in the standard of faith would take place.

But further, it is essential to a rational faith, that the authorized statement of it be so framed and understood as not to involve any positive contradictions : that this is not the case with the faith of the Romish Church is evident, because she makes an open boast of putting to the trial the sincerity of the faith of her votaries, by requiring them to believe what to the senses are palpable contradictions, as in the notorious instance of transubstantiation.

These few cursory remarks may serve to illustrate the comparison here intended to be exhibited between the ground of faith professed by the Church of Rome, and that which on evident and certain principles we have before proved to be a truly rational ground of faith. And thus much I conceive may suffice, in the way of gene-

ral introduction to the subject. I shall have opportunities of making more particular observations when we come to consider more particular topics of doctrine in their proper places. (*See notes.*)

(17.) 2. We proceed from this to another species of religious system, agreeing with the last in the character of admitting the authority of revelation, but superadding to it a peculiar and more powerful principle of faith. This is in fact that widely diffused system, if system it can be called, which is the result of a spirit of fanaticism and enthusiasm. This spirit once admitted, by giving way to the morbid workings of a heated imagination, becomes one of the most powerful causes of religious delusion. And when its operation has once taken effect, it finds nourishment and increases rapidly in the mind of the victim, and hurries him on from one extravagance to another, till his feelings are those of insanity rather than religion, and his actions partake in the same character.

The principle of faith in the fanatic consists, indeed, in an admission of Scripture as the word of God, an admission made probably without time being allowed by the fervour of his heated imagination, for the votary to examine the evidences on which it is supported:—to this admission, however, he superadds the firm persuasion of his own peculiar illumination by the gift of

the Holy Spirit; a species of inspiration which enables him "to see the wonderful things of God's law," in a light in which no one not similarly gifted can perceive them. Ask him for *evidence*, he has confessedly none to produce but his own sensations. As to a *definite rule of faith*, it is clear that nothing of the kind can be expected from such a vague and fluctuating principle of belief; and as to consistency or contradiction, it is impossible to say whether the one or the other prevails in doctrines which are in themselves unintelligible. (*See notes.*)

(18.) The two species of religious belief last examined are obviously of such a nature as not to require many words to shew the unreasonableness of their principle: and, in point of fact, they do not make pretensions to a rational principle; they are founded almost entirely on the rejection of the guidance of reason—on requiring an entire submission of reason to some higher authority; a sort of principle which, upon the evidence now adduced, must be allowed to be most *essentially distinct* from that admitted under the system of receiving the literal truth of revelation as our sole guide. This requires none of that prostration of reason at the shrine of faith; none of that yielding up of the judgment to the influence of a higher authority, which is the distinctive characteristic of the other systems.

But yet to examine their pretensions, and to

point out precisely wherein their unreasonableness consists, is not an unimportant object—it is directly connected with the design of our enquiry. It is necessary to shew the deviations of religious opinion as well on one side of the line of rectitude as on the other; and to distinguish a simple reception of the literal doctrine of Scripture under the guidance of reason, from the perversions to which that doctrine is subjected when other authority is admitted, is most essential, in order to prepare us for detecting the fallacies of that system which sets up reason, or something usurping its place, as the sole arbiter of religious truth, and which would confound together in its censures the rational and literal belief in Scripture, with the irrationalities of superstition and fanaticism.

II. (19.) In enquiring into the nature of those views of religion which arrogate to themselves the peculiar title of rational opinions, we have in the first place to observe, that those who adopt them neither call in question the primary truths of Natural Religion, nor the general authority of revelation; they, in fact, dwell particularly on the former, and make them the professed standard, by which they judge of the doctrines contained in the latter.

It is difficult, however, to conceive upon what possible principle of reason their mode of regard-

ing revelation can be defended. To any man of plain understanding it must, I should conceive, be sufficiently evident, that we have only one alternative—the Bible either is, or is not, the word of God. This question can be settled only by an examination of the evidences offered in proof of its divine origin. If these be found deficient, there is at once an end of all question as to the truth of particular doctrines: if, on the other hand, they be found satisfactory, with what shadow of reason can we reject any portion of the system which Scripture teaches? and to profess a belief in revelation in general, while we deny any of its truths in particular, is merely not liking to reject it as a whole, to content ourselves with only rejecting all its essential parts.

And while it is thus pretended that revelation is admitted, but the tenor of its doctrines judged of by the standard of rational principles, the real fact is, that revelation is virtually discarded altogether. While it is pretended that reason is thus brought in as an auxiliary to Scripture, the truth is, that it is made paramount: and Christianity, interpreted by natural religion, is no longer Christianity but Deism. Revelation, mixed up with philosophy, is no longer either divine truth or human science; but a compound, in which the excellencies of both are equally lost and neutralized; and all that is rank and offensive in

such false philosophy, is evolved in nauseous effluvia, spreading moral pestilence and corruption.

Such a system, then, does in fact ground itself on authority altogether distinct from, and opposed to, that of revelation, which it professes to receive and reverence. It in fact sets up what are termed principles of reason, as the sole test by which we are to judge of the truth of doctrines, whether bearing the character of revelation, or derived from any other sort of authority whatever. This standard it seeks to establish as the only correct rule of reasonable belief. The upholders of such views set out by assuming certain general principles, and then decide upon the truth or falsehood of all doctrines proposed, according to their agreement or disagreement with those principles.

These general principles they maintain to be those which are the necessary deductions of reason, from an extended and unprejudiced contemplation of the natural and moral order of things; that they are principles in themselves immutable and universal, and that consequently any thing which, upon however good authority, may be advanced in apparent opposition to them, must either be rejected as unworthy of rational belief, or at least explained away, till it is made to accord with the assumed principles.

Upon this general ground, opinions and sys-

tems have been framed, differing from each other by various gradations and shades of distinction, but all agreeing in their fundamental principle. It is upon nothing more than an extension of this system that the total rejection of revelation by the Deist, and of all religious belief by the Atheist, is defended. Upon the subject of these views it is not my intention to treat. I proceed to others, which may be thought to have a little more at least of the appearance of reason in their favour. The creed of the Unitarian is among those of this class, which are most in vogue in the present day. It is to certain doctrines of Scripture, rather than to the arguments for revelation in general, that what are called the principles of reason are applied by those who profess this creed in its several modifications. But from the very nature of such a mode of proceeding, it is evident that no very high degree of reverence can be attached to the Scriptures by those who adopt it, even if they do not positively reject the Bible; and when once the principle is admitted, of making every thing yield to an assumed standard of reason, it becomes extremely difficult to say to what precise extent the application of that principle is to be carried, or to define the boundaries of what is called Unitarianism, and to shew where it is separated from absolute Deism.

The principle is in itself extremely vague, and the systems of opinions resulting from its adop-

tion, appear under an almost endless variety of forms and gradations. The number perhaps of those professing actual Unitarianism is small, but its leading principle, it is to be apprehended, is more or less adopted, with various shades of difference, by great numbers, many of whom in outward profession are supporters of established opinions and institutions. And what are termed *rational views of religion*, may be understood to comprehend those varieties of doctrine, which, however diversified, are marked by the same common feature of *assuming what are called rational first principles, by the rule of which all doctrines are to be judged of.* (See notes.)

(20.) But while the artful advocates of such systems urge them upon the attention of the world, with an exterior of considerable speciousness, and while they flatter the intellectual vanity of the superficial sciolist, with representations of no small plausibility, the man who is really desirous of settling his religious faith upon an unbiassed conviction, will feel the necessity of not resting satisfied with mere outward plausibility. He will seek to reduce these arguments to their primary elements; he will be disposed to strip them of their specious exterior, so as to examine their real pretensions; and analyze their first principles. He will, in fact, perceive, that whatever appearance of truth there may be in the general proposition, that the *unreasonableness of a*

doctrine discredits its evidence, the most important part of the question is, *wherein does the unreasonableness consist?* And it is precisely this point, which the rash and presumptuous judgement of the partially informed theorist passes over without attention, but which the inquirer of more enlarged views and more cautious spirit, perceives to be a consideration of primary importance, and treats with the attention it deserves, both in regard to its consequence, and the difficulty which he sees must attend the examination of it.

(21.) It is only as to the *principle* and *ground* of belief that I make these general observations. The question will be discussed in the sequel, as to the principal particular doctrines which have been subjected to this sort of self-called *rational* interpretation; but the remarks here made will suffice to point out in a general way the unreasonableness of such a ground-work of belief. When we soberly and cautiously inquire with what truth such principles can be brought forward, when we examine upon what sort of evidence they are deduced, and with what degree of precision they can be applied to questions of religious belief, they are clearly deficient. For, what are the foundations either of physical or moral truth, on which we can deduce any such principles? Where is the source of information from which we derive our knowledge of divine things? Where are those exalted capacities and

powers which can qualify us to take comprehensive surveys of another world? What is the previous stock of ideas of these things with which we can enter upon the discussion? Where is the previous knowledge which furnishes us with our data, or can enable us to argue *à priori* on such topics? What are these elevated principles of immutable reason and eternal truth, before which all other doctrines are to give way? So pompous and imposing are these terms in sound, that perhaps we can hardly help feeling surprise, when, on putting them to the test of accurate examination, we discover them to mean absolutely nothing. In the survey, slight as it is, which we have already taken of the limited range of the human faculties, and the narrow track to which our widest intellectual excursions are confined, this has, I trust, been sufficiently apparent. In point of evidence, then, these principles have no solid foundation;—to teach men the hidden mysteries of heaven is not the province either of natural or moral philosophy;—no principles of religious inquiry can be deduced by correct reasoning from any truths established in either. The principles of the rationalist, then, are in fact mere gratuitous assumptions.

Next, as to definiteness, it is obvious that the principle assumed is of the most vague and indefinite character conceivable: what is consistent with reason, will be nothing more than what

is consistent with the notions, prejudices, caprices, and propensities of each individual; and as to consistency with itself, it will be a difficult point to ascertain when the principle is of so very fluctuating and uncertain a nature.

(22.) The reasonable inquirer has then to compare and to choose between these different systems. One of these is, that we take up, on well attested authority, the revealed word of God; with becoming humility acknowledge the impossibility of judging of its contents on any general principles; and therefore, as the only prudent course, adopt all its literal declarations, and are content to be guided by them, till a more perfect state of existence may open to us more enlarged views. Other systems again teach the reception of revelation, but none of them with becoming reverence. They have all their several independent authorities, which are in some cases made equal to that of revelation itself, and in others superior to it. The disciples of one system are governed by an infatuation which, captivating their understandings, makes them blindly follow all its wild extravagancies; and, persuading them that they are gifted with a divine illumination, shews them the doctrines of revelation under the most extraordinary and fantastic shades of colouring. The votaries of another system are held under the most slavish obedience to what they are made to consider an infallible

authority, which represents revelation to them in such degrees and portions, as best answers its purposes of artful policy.

Under both sorts of influence, men are not absolutely drawn away from the word of God ; but they are persuaded to put fallacious comments upon it ; to deduce much more precise meanings from particular passages, than the obvious construction of the words can possibly bear ; and to extract from all the declarations of the inspired writers (to objects however different they may obviously be designed to apply), something in support of their peculiar system ; some assurance, some testimony, or some argument which shall confirm them still more in their peculiar views ; and rivet yet more firmly upon them the fetters of superstition or of enthusiasm.

But while the advocates of these systems err in making the writers of Scripture say *more* than they intended, the other class err equally in making them say *less*. The philosophizing interpreters seem to take for granted, that the sacred writers had no definite meaning in what they wrote ; that they toiled and suffered, and laboured by preaching and writing, to propagate a system which in itself had no peculiarities, and taught nothing which reason could not have discovered. They assume, as a rule of interpretation, that in order to a reasonable interpretation of an author's meaning, we are to affix to his words our ow

sense; and in order to learn the doctrine which he teaches, have only to substitute that which we already know.

In receiving every part of revelation as it stands, whether plain or mysterious, the Church of England requires *imagination* to submit to *reason*,—*theory* to *fact*. The spirit of enthusiasm requires *reason* to submit to *imagination*; the Church of Rome requires reason to surrender to the dominion of servile superstition. Unitarian philosophy sets up theory to the rejection of fact, and requires not only enthusiasm and superstition to be altogether discarded, but all rational respect for authority, all common estimation of evidence, to give way before an arbitrary system; which seeks, at the expence of facts, to simplify our views of religious truth, and after all (as will appear in the sequel) fails in doing so. (*See notes.*)

(23.) That the Unitarian plan of dismembering Scripture, of rejecting as much as they can, and perverting what they cannot reject, is in the most extreme degree irrational and unphilosophical; is I conceive abundantly shewn, from the observations already made on the rule, wherein a truly reasonable method of inquiry consists. But nothing appears to me to put the unreasonableness of the Unitarian plan in a more decisive point of view, than to compare it with the systems adopted by those who run into the opposite

extremes of superstition and enthusiasm; and whose schemes of doctrine are regarded by the Unitarian with the most philosophical contempt. He would probably be surprized at being told that he is doing nothing more than following the example which they have set him, and taking as the model of his rational system, the schemes of those whom he despises as being opposed to all philosophical inquiry. Yet such is clearly the fact. If the Unitarian supports his doctrines by the rejection of a considerable portion of Scripture, is not this precisely equivalent to the plan of the Church of Rome, who, to maintain her superstitions, keeps back the volume of Scripture from the people, and only deals out to them such portions in her services as may suffice to answer her purposes? Where is the practical difference between denying the authority of Scripture, and not allowing that authority to have its free exercise?

: And further, I would ask, are not both these methods of proceeding more nearly allied than we might at first suspect, to the practices of the fanatic? Do we not find him constantly and exclusively dwelling upon particular parts and favourite passages of the Scriptures? Is not his peculiar doctrinal belief founded entirely upon detached passages wrested from their contexts, and exalted to the depression of all other parts, viewed without reference to the general tenor of

the sacred volume, and insisted upon as comprising the "one thing needful," to the neglect of all other and more practical passages? Are not these interpreters so carried away by their infatuation in favour of a peculiar doctrinal view, that to whatever degree it may be contradicted by other more clear and practical declarations, they do not scruple to pass over those declarations without paying them the slightest attention? And what is this but a rejection of such parts of Scripture as do not suit their preconceived notions? What is it but an exemplification of the *philosophical* maxims of rational religion, adopted by a set of persons who would as much despise the application of philosophical considerations in their religious inquiries, as the rationalists would the idea of a divine illumination. (*See notes.*)

(24.) In the present stage of the inquiry, there is only one further point of comparison in which we may place these several opposing systems: this regards the gradual progress of illumination in the world, and its supposed connection with changes in religious opinion.

It is not here, as in the physical sciences, that we advance the cause of truth by clearing away the false systems of former times, as the work of an ignorant age. If there be any thing in the force of that evidence, by which the truth of revelation is attested, in the character of the revelation itself, in the authority from whence the

Christian religion derives its origion, it must be evident that the purity of its truth is not to be sought in the conceptions of modern philosophy, but by going back to the fountain head. If, as in many instances has undeniably been the case, the simplicity of revealed truth has been grossly corrupted, the removal of those corruptions is to be effected not by substituting any new system, the offspring of a theorizing philosophy, but by ascertaining, from the authentic and original documents of that revelation, what its primary character was. It has been a favourite idea with some who pretend to very liberal views, that during a succession of ignorant and semi-barbarous ages, the Christian Religion was involved in so entire a corruption, that the very substance of it was nearly lost : the Reformation, it is said, commenced a partial restoration and simplification of the truth ; but the completion of the great work was to be reserved to a more enlightened and philosophic age. Reason was now to assert her empire—the extension of science had given mankind juster ideas of their intellectual superiority, and enabled them to perceive that religion wanted still further re-modelling, to make it suitable to the extended licence which the mind now claimed.

(25.) But, if we look into history, what is the view we obtain of the real progress of these rational improvements on religion ? In the very

earliest times of Christianity, and before any of its alleged corruptions had taken place, we find a host of sectarists, under different titles, and with various pretensions, setting themselves up as the philosophic simplifiers of religious truth. Long before reason had made one step towards investigating the phenomena of nature, or analysing the laws of the material universe, a spirit usurping the name of reason had assumed an authority over faith; and made pretensions to a more correct and enlightened system of religion. In an age, when the light of discovery was too feeble to display any glimpse of the system of nature, it was thought by many, powerful enough to penetrate far and wide into the regions beyond nature. The Gnostic, and other kindred heresies in religion, were derived from the wildest flights of the Platonic and Pythagorean reveries in philosophy. The progress of these *rational* views in religion, so far from accompanying the advance of inductive science, has always closely followed the aberrations of mysticism and extravagance: instead of being the result of intellectual illumination in modern times, these extraordinary discoveries are only the offspring of the darkness, caprice, and error, of ancient scholastic conceits.

(26.) And, in thus pretending to complete what the reformation left unfinished, the Unitarians shew themselves the worthy confederates of the fanatics. That the reformation did not go

far enough, was the unceasing cry of the puritanical faction in past ages, and is still reiterated by the enthusiasm of the present times. It is precisely on the same principle that both these opposite parties proceed, imagining alike that the further they recede from popery, the nearer they must approach to pure and rational religion. It is in pursuit of the very same object, that the one wages war with all external forms and institutions, and the other with all peculiar doctrines: it is by the influence of the same deceitful principle of a fancied *internal illumination*, that both are misled to the rejection of all reasonable authority. Whilst each, in setting up this paramount authority in their own minds, does nothing more than follow the very model of those pretensions to infallibility, against which he professes such inveterate hostility.

(27.) And, while the fanatic and the rationalist accuse the scriptural Protestant of being still more than half popish, it is remarkable that the Romanist stigmatizes the reformation as having a direct and necessary tendency to every sort of uncertainty and error;—to Socinianism, and ultimate Infidelity. Such is always the reproach they cast upon us when once we have renounced the infallible authority of the Church. And, in truth, to tend to such consequences, is precisely the boasted object, the very professed design of the rationalist; in which he is effectually,

though unconsciously seconded and assisted by the blind enthusiast. (*See notes.*)

So soon as we have quitted the pale of the Roman Church, her advocates tell us, we have given up all certain and infallible ground of faith. They accuse us of opening the Bible to the world, and thereby opening the very flood-gates of error and extravagance; and, above all, that when we have once departed from the literal sense of Scripture, as in the instance of the institution of the Lord's Supper, we virtually do away with all fixed principles of interpretation, all definite standard of doctrine. And in this imputation the rationalizing party most cordially join, and urge upon us this instance as a complete dereliction of our professed rule of literal interpretation, and a triumphant argument for the necessity of admitting their metaphorical mode of exposition, by which they would purge Christianity of all its corruptions; merely carrying a little further the same principle which we have applied to get rid of transubstantiation.

(28.) The distinction between believing what is contrary to the evidence of our *senses*, and what is contrary only to some preconceived notion of our *imagination*, is alone a sufficient ground of distinction between such a doctrine as transubstantiation, and the revealed mysteries of things invisible. But there is another consideration which it here becomes necessary to advert

to: it is this—that however closely we may adhere to the letter of Scripture, *transubstantiation* is NOT the LITERAL doctrine of Scripture. As this is a point on which our opponents of both parties are peculiarly fond of insisting, it may not be misplaced if we briefly refer to the scriptural proofs alluded to.

In the first place, to whatever degree of minuteness we carry the literal interpretation of the words of the institution, “This is my body *,” and the declaration that the disciples should “eat the flesh of the Son of man †,” &c.—and the expression of St. Paul, that the Corinthians “did not discern the Lord’s body ‡,”—we must, at the same time remember, that the undeniable rule of *literal* interpretation is to take no passages detached, but to build upon their combined tenor: thus we must, together with the *literal* sense of these words just cited, admit also in its *literal* sense that the “bread which was broken §” was *simply bread*; and further, that the Apostles, when on so many occasions they are said to have “broken bread,” did *literally* communicate in the mere element of bread, without any change being wrought ||: that this breaking of actual bread, according to Christ’s command, is done in “re-

* Matt. xxvi. 26. † John vi. 53. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

§ 1 Cor. x. 16. || Acts ii. 42, &c.

*membrance of him **," and consequently without his *corporeal presence*. And that, again, by simply "eating this bread," in the literal sense, "we do shew forth the Lord's *death* †," which would hardly be the case if he were manifested *alive*.

Thus, if we follow the *literal sense*, we must necessarily frame our doctrine upon the sense of all these, and similar passages *combined*. Transubstantiation, it must be recollected, makes a total and absolute change of what was at first real bread, into the real body of Christ, so that it is no longer bread. The combined tenor of the above passages, when interpreted to *the utmost rigour of the letter*, requires us to believe, that in some way, or in some sense, the consecrated element is still truly and actually bread, whilst it is also the body of Christ. This alone, without going any farther, would prove that transubstantiation is *not the literal doctrine* of Scripture.

But here, again, we must keep to the *letter* of Scripture, and instead of attempting to explain this union by the subtile distinctions and scholastic conceits of *consubstantiation*, we must understand it according to the plain exposition of St. Paul, as "*the communion of the body of Christ* †,"

* Luke xxii, 19. † 1 Cor. xi, 26. † 1 Cor. x, 16.

and according to the collective tenor of our Lord's whole discourse in John vi. 32—58. Similar arguments might be carried on to a considerable extent, but what I have now stated will, it may be presumed, be amply sufficient to shew that our interpretation of the nature of the Holy Communion is not in the slightest degree a dereliction of the rule of *literal* interpretation: but, on the contrary, arises from nothing but a *rejection upon this very principle* of the *mystical glosses* put upon the simplicity of the sacred text, by the decisions of councils, and the authority of those who “corrupt the word of God by their traditions, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men *.”

(29.) In other instances besides that of transubstantiation, the same objections are brought forward, and similar remarks might be unanswerably urged in reply. Into these topics it will be unnecessary now to enter. Enough has been said to shew the entire fallacy of the whole supposition, that a gradual illumination of the Christian world has taken place, or is to continue, by a gradual departure from the literal sense of Scripture. On the contrary, the progress of true religion must always be from the corruptions and conceits of human wisdom, towards the pure and unsophisticated source of divine truth.

* Matt. xv. 6. 9. Mark vii. 7. 13.

SECTION II.

ON RATIONAL VIEWS OF THE DOCTRINES RESPECTING THE DIVINE NATURE.

- § 1. I. Rational principles of inquiry into these doctrines, deduced from examining,
1. What knowledge we have previously to revelation.
 2. The belief in a Deity admitted by the opponents.
 3. The idea we form of Him by natural reason.
 4. Not such as to give any ground for reasoning *à priori*.
 5. 2. Thus coming to Scripture for information, what course we are to pursue:
Revelation teaches nothing as to the Divine essence.
Cautious and extensive examination of Scripture necessary.
 6. No objections on critical grounds.
 7. The Literal doctrine to be collected from the statement of various particulars.
 8. How they are to be reconciled, not explained.

9. Contradictions arise only from imaginary conceptions of the Deity.
10. II. Examination of the views of the different parties.
 1. The Unitarian admits the existence of one God, but objects to the more particular doctrine, and substitutes a theory of his own.
11. Inquiry into the proof of this theory.
 1. Direct external proofs from Scripture: no metaphysical ideas there taught of the Divine Unity.
12. Metaphorical interpretation, forced, unnatural, and impossible.
13. II. From reason: no ideas which can contradict any more particular ones, subsequently proposed.
14. II. Internal evidence: reasonableness of the Unitarian view, equally mysterious with the scriptural doctrine.
15. Presumption of framing such theories.
16. II. Dogmas of the Romish Church: over-refinement on the principles of human reason the fault of Romish divines; scholastic theology, &c.
17. Some councils Arian: inconsistent with each other: yet all infallible.
18. Offensive idolatry in forming pictures and images of the Deity:—like theories of his nature.

19. III. Ideas of the fanatic on this subject :
enthusiasm does away all distinction
between mysteries and other truths :
makes all equally familiar by sen-
sible impressions.
20. Irreverent familiarities.
21. Comparative view : similarity of men-
tal with external idolatry.
Humility of simple scriptural faith :
good practical tendency.
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(1.) We have thus far considered the general grounds upon which a truly reasonable belief may be built. We have examined the pretensions of several systems, not looking into their doctrines in detail, but only surveying the foundation upon which they rest. This foundation, when laid otherwise than in the secure basis of Scripture, we have seen to be defective. The reception of the written word of God, precisely as it is disclosed to us, and proved as it is by the most incontrovertible evidence, is shewn to be, speaking in general terms, a perfectly reasonable ground for religious belief. The several systems which have been noticed as departing from this principle, are clearly deficient in that degree of reasonableness, which may justly be required in any system, to be taken as our guide in so important an enquiry, as that respecting the way of salvation. Some of these systems fall short of the standard of Scripture; others go beyond it: the disciples of one seem as if always in dread lest they should believe too much: those of the others, lest they should never believe enough. And though deriving, or supposing themselves to derive, their wisdom from widely different sources, they are all alike "Wise above that which is written."

But we have thus far only examined the com-

parative reasonableness of the different *grounds* of faith in general. It still remains to enquire whether there be not any arguments deducible from the *particular doctrines* of these systems, which may be a further or more correct guide to the relative value we are to assign to them. Though the fundamental principle of a system may be rational, its details may be much otherwise. If the former afford an argument for the reception of the system, we must also examine whether the latter be such as to corroborate, or to discredit that argument. This, then, is the object of the ensuing part of the present enquiry.

The particular doctrines to be considered, naturally divide themselves into two classes; those respecting the Divine Nature, and those respecting the Dispensations of God, in regard to the spiritual state and future destiny of man. And under each division we shall first have to enquire what principles we can assume—what degree of knowledge we can attain to enable us to reason upon such subjects, antecedently to revelation;—and then to examine the particular views of the pretended rational system, as tried by the test of those principles; and of the other opposing systems, equally deviating in other ways from the plain sense of Scripture.

(2.) All the professors of different religious systems, with whom we have to do, agree in acknowledging a Deity. They all profess to adore

the God of nature. They alike recognize His power and wisdom in the works of Creation. They alike regard the great first cause and mover of the Universe, as alone supreme and over all from the beginning.

To our present purpose it is important to observe *how much* we thus learn from the light of nature, and *what sort of idea* it is we thus form of the Deity.

The slightest observation points out to us the beautiful arrangements of the structure of the material creation, obviously contrived to answer particular and important purposes. We see these arrangements connected by the most astonishing laws of harmony and order, so as not merely to bear a reference to one particular immediate end, which they are calculated to answer, but to be subservient to much more extended purposes, and to the maintenance of a lengthened chain of cause and effect; to be the means of promoting more distant good by the operation of the more immediate. We discover prospective contrivances, which it would have far surpassed human ingenuity to have designed. We find the means invariably and exactly adapted to the end; and the most important ends brought about by the most simple apparatus of means. We discern an admirable economy of powers; we observe nothing done in vain; and our attention is forcibly called to many instances of arrangement

and design, the ends or objects of which elude our search, and which we must confess are elevated far above the region of our contemplation.

Thus it is that we every where trace the marks of supreme intelligence : thus it is that we perceive the designs of universal beneficence : thus it is that we learn to acknowledge the hand of a Divine artificer : thus it is that we deduce the truth of his eternal existence and omnipresence : thus we frame our ideas of a supreme power, and of the glorious and adorable perfections with which the manifestations of that power shew it to be accompanied.

We see the universal operation of these perfections in works of infinite wisdom and prospective design. We acknowledge a constituting and arranging power, immense in its operation, to reach to the most distant worlds and systems ; and comprehensively minute, to contrive the smallest and most delicate organized structures. We see the succession of causes and events so ordered, as to tend to designs of which we can understand but a very small part : but in that small part we see the effects of a providential arrangement, always intending and producing good ; but not creating good without permitting the intermixture of evil ; and by the instrumentality of evil, advancing in hidden and mysterious ways, great and comprehensive designs of good.

This is, in fact, all that natural reason can

teach us, but in reference to our immediate purpose, we have to examine carefully *what sort of idea* of the Supreme Being it is that we hence form.

(3.) Our idea, then, in the first place, it must be recollected, is one derived solely from an induction of particulars. It neither does, nor can, from its nature, include any notion of the primary or ultimate principle of the nature of that Essence, or Being, of whom it is conceived. This is, in fact, most evident, from the very mode by which we arrive at this idea, whatever it may be. So that to whatever degree of clearness we might advance in our conceptions, those conceptions must be but partial, and *such as would allow us no ground for arguing à priori*, as to what other ideas might or might not be admissible, as forming additional parts in our complex idea of the Divine nature.

In this way men of the most exalted intellectual powers have framed their ideas of a Deity; and have been constrained to confess that the more they reflected upon *Him*, the less they were able to comprehend his nature; but the more they reflected on *his works*, the more were they convinced of his existence and perfections.

It must be evident, that to attain to a perfect idea of God, is not given to man. Our only knowledge of him (so far as reason is our guide) is framed by putting together the few, though

certain, inferences which we make from observing his *works* and the *effects* of his Divine powers and perfections as displayed in those works. These notions, when put together, are utterly insufficient to constitute an idea of the essence of the Deity: they are in themselves incomplete and inadequate. We cannot form a perfect and definite idea of any one attribute or power of the Divinity, much less can we by putting together such ideas, attain to any thing like an adequate conception of Him in whom these perfections are united and summed up. The separate ideas are imperfect in themselves; and, when put together, do not form a complete whole. (*See notes.*)

(4.) It is not, however, my intention to enter any further upon those arguments which constitute the main portion of what is termed Natural Theology. The conclusions thus deduced are all conceded and admitted by those with whom the present argument is concerned; and so far from in any way derogating from the truth or importance of these primary doctrines, the fault of the rationalizing party is rather in carrying them to too great an extent, and assigning to them a more paramount authority, than I can admit they are entitled to. My object in these remarks is to shew how little we really learn by the light of nature, as to any principles *upon which we can REASON* as to the doctrines of religion. The

truth of what we do thus learn, is indeed demonstratively shewn, but the extent of the information is extremely limited, and the ideas extremely indefinite.

We may certainly derive many considerations sufficient to form a very strong ground of reverential adoration and moral obedience,—but I contend we can derive scarcely any ideas sufficient to form the smallest ground of argumentative deduction. We learn nothing respecting the supreme intelligence of nature, which can afford us any data on which to decide upon the reasonableness or unreasonableness of other doctrines, which on subsequent authority may be propounded respecting Him.

These remarks may suffice to point out the degree of information which we can be said to possess on these topics, previously to an acquaintance with Scripture.

Where then are any immutable principles of reason and truth which will enable us to reason upon the propriety of a belief in such doctrines as revelation may disclose to us? In order to shew that any doctrine involves contradictions, it is surely necessary to have some other truth previously established, to which it can be contradictory. But what truths are we here furnished with respecting the Deity, which will suffice for such a purpose?

(5.) When we come to the volume of inspira-

tion, we find nothing tending to discredit the deductions of natural reason, but much to establish and enlarge them, respecting our belief in the Supreme Being. We find the God of nature recognized as the object of our love, obedience, and adoration. But we find him invested with yet more glorious and adorable perfections than we had by natural light supposed. We find several attributes as those of mercy, and particular providential care ascribed to him, which natural reason had failed to make known. But besides these, yet further discoveries are made of the dispensations of God towards us, and of his mercy displayed, in reference to our spiritual concerns and well being. It is in the announcement of these divine counsels, that we find the sacred writers, *if we take them in their literal sense*, conveying also intimations sufficiently positive, of certain sublime and mysterious truths respecting the Divine nature. These truths are, in fact, involved in the very first principles of the scheme of revelation. And when we reflect upon what sort of idea we can form of the Divine Being by the light of reason, when we recur to the considerations before adduced on this point, and acknowledge how little we can hope to comprehend of Him, we must surely be prepared to expect the disclosures of revelation to be equally remote from our apprehensions.

If the most general and distant idea of a Deity

be one which involves considerations too vast for the human faculties to grasp, surely when the doctrine is extended to more particular assertions, we must expect the difficulties to become proportionably greater.

Upon examining the volume of Scripture, we find the sacred writers adopting various modes of representing the Deity, in terms adapted to the weakness of our conceptions: but we are not merely to consider a few insulated passages, we have to inquire into the general tendency of the whole; we have to contemplate the Deity not only as expressly described in words, but as manifested in his dispensations: we have to collect and compare a variety of passages, which in their literal acceptance clearly intimate doctrines respecting the nature and manifestations of the Deity. It has been already observed, that in any attempt to state the doctrine resulting from a collection of particular assertions, we ought never to omit or pass over any apparent difficulty, any thing in which such assertions may appear to be at variance. We must neglect no apparent exception; we must carefully state all such exceptions before we can deduce the general truth, with that caution and circumspection which alone affords a solid foundation.

(6.) It forms no part of my plan to enter into an examination of Scriptural texts—this branch of the inquiry has, in fact, been so completely

exhausted by the learned and profound investigations of the most distinguished scholars and divines, that it would be impossible to add any thing which could tend to its further elucidation. And, in fact, when the Scripture is taken according to the established canon, the genuineness of particular passages examined according to the admitted principles of criticism, and the meaning ascertained agreeably to the correct construction, no one capable of forming an opinion on the subject, and coming to the examination of it with an unbiassed mind, can possibly misapprehend the *literal* assertions of the sacred writers.

In the very attempts to explain away these literal declarations by ingenious refinements, the fact is conceded, that *if the literal sense* be taken, the expressions are positive and unequivocal. And this is all that is needed for the present purpose. The dismemberment of the sacred volume by the most unfounded and capricious mutilations, is a proceeding too palpably contrary to every principle of rational inquiry, to require any animadversion. The reasonable inquirer, whatever prejudices he may entertain against particular doctrines, will surely be content to receive as the genuine text, whatever has passed the ordeal of such a critic as Griesbach, to say nothing of others not more disposed to let any

thing pass which could with plausibility be rejected. (*See notes.*)

(7.) In what, then, does our confession of the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity consist, that any contradiction can be supposed to belong to it? It is simply this—we confess our entire ignorance of the Divine nature: that we have no ground whatever to judge of what the Scripture may assert, on antecedent principles; that we have no previous standard with which to compare any views which may be there revealed to us. If, then, in searching for the information which Scripture may give us, we meet with expressions which are to appearance of an opposing character; we have still no ground for rejecting either of them, and acknowledging them all alike to partake in the character of Divine truths, the only course we can adopt in stating the whole resulting doctrine, is to *state all its parts*, to bring together and contrast those statements which might seem at variance with each other; to understand the real doctrine as the collective result; and since we cannot deduce any general expression, to content ourselves with stating all the particulars of which it is made up.

We find, then, in the Scriptures, numerous passages, which in their literal sense assert the Divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as well as of the Father. We find other passages

which as strongly assert that there is but one God. These expressions appear at variance with each other, but they are all unquestionably the assertions of the word of God, and we cannot reject or omit any one of them. Even if we were at liberty to do so, there would be no reason to determine which ought to be rejected and which retained ; but we are not thus at liberty. In stating our belief in what the Scripture teaches, we must state it entire : we must then introduce all these assertions into our confession of faith, and our belief respecting the Divine nature must be made up of all these particulars.

(8.) But these particular assertions, according to ordinary ideas, appear at variance with each other. We are assured, however, that they are all portions of Divine truth ; consequently, neither can any of them be untrue, nor can they in reality contradict each other. There must in truth be some way in which they are reconciled together ; but as to how this is effected, we have no information in Scripture, consequently we do not attempt to describe it in our profession of faith.

The terms of human origin, of which use is made in the formularies of the Church, are employed to express in one word the doctrine of Scripture, which otherwise would require much circumlocution ; and as the language in which we speak of the Deity must be entirely borrowed

from the language applied to the nature, relations, and actions of men, it would be unavoidable that in speaking of the mysteries of revelation, we should express them in terms which seemed to bear the nearest analogy to the relations mentioned in Scripture, however inadequate they might be to express them. The province of reason will here be, to bear this distinction in mind; and to be particularly cautious that in using such terms we have a due regard to not attaching any meaning to them beyond that of their being the representatives of scriptural ideas, otherwise incapable of being expressed without circumlocution. (*See notes.*)

(9.) The reason why men find objections and contradictions, in the doctrine of the Trinity, is this: they frame in their own minds an imaginary idea of the Deity; and persuade themselves they have a clear defined conception of one infinite spiritual Being: this being once supposed, it is not surprising that they cannot be content to lay together the apparently opposing intimations of Scripture, and to deduce the literal doctrine, upon the collective tenor of such assertions, without regarding their own preconceived notion.

When, however, we view, by the light of unbiassed reason, the irrefragable proofs afforded by the examination of nature, we see how groundless such imaginary conceptions are: and the less we can frame any definite idea of the eternal

and immense power and intelligence whose manifestations we see throughout the universe, the less difficulty can we find in receiving the literal declarations of Holy Writ, respecting his nature.

(10.) From the foregoing considerations, I trust it will sufficiently appear, how totally destitute we are of all principles on which to argue, as to the reasonableness of particular views of the divine nature. To adopt, therefore, in its literal sense, the information which revelation gives us is the course which, I contend, no well regulated mind can refuse to follow ; and which perfectly accords with what we have previously established as the rule of rational faith. In following up the plan proposed, it will now be necessary to advert to the opinions of the other parties at first described ; and who, in different ways, depart from the simplicity of that faith which we have found to be the most reasonable, and which is not less the ancient and genuine “ form of sound words *,” — “ the faith once delivered to the saints †.”

(11.) I. To come to the case of the Unitarian : his belief is in the Deity of natural religion, infinite in perfections, and possessing the various adorable attributes, which natural religion justly ascribes to him. One, also, and sole in his supreme dominion. To this belief he superadds that aris-

* 2 Tim. i. 13.

† Jude iii.

ing from a reception of some parts of the Holy Scriptures, when interpreted in a particular way. He believes in some other attributes, perhaps, besides those which natural theology teaches. Moreover, he insists yet more particularly on the essential unity of the Deity, from the very express and positive terms in which the belief in more gods than one is reprobated in those sacred books.

There are, however, as has already been shewn, other doctrines respecting the Divine Nature, maintained by the sacred writers, if understood in their literal sense; doctrines which, (unless we reject a very considerable part of Scripture) are involved in the very first principles of the scheme of revelation. These doctrines the Unitarian rejects.

And his rejection is founded upon this principle: he takes the standard of reason as that by which alone all his opinions are to be regulated: he conceives it reasonable to believe in a Deity: he forms an idea of the Divine Nature, which is, to his apprehension, rational. So far as the doctrine of Scripture accords with this idea, he embraces it: but the more particular view resulting from the literal interpretation of certain passages, he maintains, involves a direct contradiction to the principles of reason; he therefore considers the view so resulting, to discredit revelation, and gets rid of it by rejecting a consider-

able part of the Sacred Volume, and putting a forced and unnatural construction upon what remains.

Such is the system of the rationalist. We have now to enquire into its evidence, clearness, and consistency. (*See notes.*)

(11.) When a man rejects any doctrine, and wishes to substitute another view of the subject in its place, one essential point, in order to his doing so with reason and propriety must be, that the doctrine substituted be founded upon proof, at least equally strong with that on which the other was built.

We have already taken a view of the grounds on which the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is built. It is sufficiently clear that it rests upon the literal truth of innumerable explicit assertions of the sacred writers; and this upon the proofs of the authenticity and inspiration of the Scriptures.

This doctrine the Unitarian rejects, and wishes to substitute in its place a doctrine of his own. The belief in a divine Being, absolutely one in his ultimate essence, without distinction of persons.

Now, let us enquire upon what grounds, or what sort of proof, is this doctrine founded?

Is it founded upon the declarations of Scripture, whatever rule of interpretation we admit?

In reference to this question, it has been al-

ready observed, that the sacred writers do most unquestionably assert the unity of the Deity: they most undoubtedly maintain that there neither is, nor can be, any other separate Deity besides. To this purpose innumerable passages equally strong and plain might be adduced. But we have yet to enquire in what part of the sacred books, any such precise metaphysical statements, concerning the ultimate essence of the Divine Nature are to be found, as would be requisite for the Unitarian to build his creed upon. For it is not a bare general declaration that the Divine nature and perfections are one and incommunicable;—of a mere statement of the Divine unity in such plain terms as are sufficient for a foundation to the practical duties of worship, and obedience to be offered him; it is not any such simple modes of expression as these, that would suffice to give the requisite degree of precision to the Unitarian's views. The expressions of the Bible are adapted and intended chiefly to convey to us such ideas of the Divine Majesty, and of the effects of his wisdom and power, as shall be most powerful instruments of practical improvement to us. But they were not designed to teach us metaphysics. They shew us as much as it concerns us to know of God: but as to his ultimate essence, and the recondite mystery of his nature, they shew us very little, and that little under a form which makes it impossible for

us to reduce the enquiry to the level of our reasoning powers.

The sacred writers most expressly assert the unity of the Deity: but they do so as opposing Polytheism. They have evidently no design whatever to express any metaphysical doctrine as to the nature of the Divine essence. But, in order to afford a sufficient ground for Unitarian opinions, it is necessary that such a view of the Divine unity should be derived from Scripture, as would be absolutely contradictory to the doctrine of the Trinity: that is to say, we must derive such a clear positive idea of the nature of the Divine essence, as shall enable us to perceive with certainty whether any more particular assertions are consistent or not with that idea. But this is a sort of information which no part of Scripture is capable of affording. The expressions of Revelation are general: they neither profess to give us any metaphysical views;—nor, we may safely conclude, could such views be in any way brought within the compass of our apprehension.

(12.) Such being the case with respect to the scriptural assertions of the Divine unity, we have now to turn our attention to those which intimate the Divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and ask upon what ground these are to be explained away.

Still confining our attention to *scriptural authority*, the whole question rests upon this; whether

certain expressions of the sacred writers can be most naturally and easily interpreted in their literal, or in any other sense ; and this (in the present stage of the argument) without any reference to abstract opinions, derived from any other source. Now, under these circumstances, the slightest acquaintance with the passages of Scripture bearing on the subject, and with the most ordinary principles of interpretation, and rules of composition, would suffice to lead any dispassionate enquirer to the obviously correct sense. To say nothing of the general rule which common sense dictates, cases may occur, in which, from collateral circumstances, the necessity of keeping to the literal interpretation may be rendered still more obvious. Thus the consideration of the evident object and design of the sacred writers must naturally be allowed great weight towards our estimation of their true meaning. When we examine the passages before referred to, and the numerous others which might be cited to the same effect, we find the particular forms of expression, and the particular circumstances under which they are introduced, to be such as absolutely and imperatively to exclude any other than the literal sense. They consist entirely of grave, didactic, statements or authoritative declarations ; of a nature altogether remote from any thing like rhetorical declamation or poetical imagery. The forms of expres-

sion are such as would be altogether inappropriate as metaphors. In making use of a metaphorical mode of expression, an author adopts terms sufficient to shew the points of resemblance in the strongest light; and thus leaves the representation, so that it will be obviously understood and applied by his reader without chance of error, and unquestionably without a chance of his mistaking the illustration for the real matter of fact, intended to be described under its likeness.

But it would be altogether contrary to the very nature of metaphorical expression, to use any terms which could imply any thing more than a resemblance. To make an assertion of identity, is to make the real object and the image one and the same thing; thus to do away with all figure of speech. To introduce or conclude a metaphorical representation, with the most solemn asseveration of the truth of what is stated, would either be most inconsistent and profane, or would necessarily do away the figure, and oblige us to understand the literal reality to be asserted. Yet such is the form of expression in which the sacred writers convey their meaning in numerous passages*.

But, even without recurring to this topic, it is clear that if these passages were intended to be

* For example, Rom. ix. 5.

understood figuratively, the sacred writers could hardly stand acquitted of a strong tendency to mislead their readers. Since the literal sense is obviously that which an ordinary reader would most naturally adopt, the consequence would be, that such readers would be liable to be most egregiously deceived on topics, respecting which, it was in a more than ordinary degree, the evident intention of the writers that they should not be deceived. (*See notes.*)

(13.) But if the Monotheistic doctrine be not founded on as good or better *scriptural* authority, is it to be preferred to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as being better proved from any abstract deductions of *reason*?

That on this ground it cannot have better evidence, appears to me as certain as in the former case: for, independently of Scripture, we can learn nothing of the Divine nature but from those deductions which we make from the contemplation of the visible world. And these lead us no further than to a very indefinite idea of some infinitely great, wise, and powerful, first cause or agent. It has indeed been argued, that besides Him, it is contradictory to admit any other separate Deity. But the term "Unity" of the Deity, as applied to any doctrine which is a conclusion from natural reasoning, must be carefully distinguished from the same term as applied

by the Unitarian to the essential mode of the Divine existence. In natural theology we learn absolutely nothing respecting the nature or mode of existence of the great first cause. It has merely been the conclusion from what we know of his works, and what we deduce concerning his attributes, that there cannot, at the same time, be any other original cause, any other supreme ruler and upholder of all things, any other infinite Being, omniscient and omnipresent, having a separate existence, dominion, and ubiquity. Such an idea implies contradictions; and if the possibility of it were admitted, would involve us in all the absurdity of polytheistic superstition.

So that on these considerations we have absolutely no ground whatever for maintaining one view of the subject, in preference to the other: we are left in equal obscurity as to both: and so far as mere natural proofs are concerned, they cannot teach us any thing which gives the slightest ground for adopting either the one doctrine or the other.

(14.) So far then as *direct external proofs* are concerned, the Unitarian doctrine has no solid foundation whatever. But there is another part of the question which bears upon the *internal evidence* of the doctrine, and regards the comparative *reasonableness* of the two opinions: and this

is, in fact, the main point on which the question hinges.

When a man rejects any particular doctrine, on the ground that it is unintelligible, or contradictory to reason, and wishes on that ground to substitute another view of the subject in its place, it is in all fairness and reason to be expected, that the doctrine so substituted should be free from the imputation alleged against the other; should be altogether devoid of ambiguity and difficulty: should be clear and precise in its enunciation, and in all respects perfectly level to our apprehension.

This, upon his own grounds, we have a right to demand of the Unitarian. Let us then apply the foregoing considerations, in order to see how the case stands. He rejects the doctrine of the Trinity because it is incapable of being so stated or explained as to be level to the apprehension of our faculties. He would therefore substitute in its place the doctrine of a Divine Being, solely and absolutely one in his nature and essence. He rejects the one because he finds it incomprehensible; but is the other free from difficulty of the same kind?

After what has been before urged, it will surely be admitted that any idea of the Deity must essentially be of a nature utterly incomprehensible to our minds. And the rationalist, in professing his belief in a Deity, upon the ground of natural

reason, does in fact confess himself bound by demonstration, to believe *infinitely more than he can comprehend*. Taking the most simple, the most definite, the most rational conception of the Deity;—that idea of His nature which is farthest removed from “*religious dogma*,” or “*theological proposition*,” it involves considerations and ideas which, however they may be concealed under a specious appearance of familiar and intelligible language, are yet in reality of a nature altogether beyond our apprehension. And the admission of them is not a little at variance with the absurd presumption of those self-conceited reasoners, who pretend they can believe nothing which they do not comprehend. Upon any thing like a careful consideration, the enquirer must be necessitated to admit, that this truth, rational as it confessedly is, is yet involved in the most impenetrable mystery.

What then does the Unitarian gain by substituting his doctrine for ours? If the one be incomprehensible, it is only on precisely the same grounds as those on which the other is so likewise. Thus, then, putting out of the question the propriety of adopting such a mode of proceeding, in point of simplicity our belief could gain nothing by substituting the one view of the subject for the other. Nor could there be any reasonable ground for rejecting one incomprehensible doctrine to adopt another just as incom-

prehensible in its stead. For to say that one incomprehensible truth is more difficult to understand than another, is clearly absurd. (*See notes.*)

(15.) Upon the whole we have this argument to urge against the Unitarian. He accuses us of too *precise* an expression of the doctrine of the divine nature. *We may retort the charge*—we may demand of him his ground for maintaining this absolute unity of person in the Divine Being. We may confidently ask, whether such a very precise and positive statement is not in a high degree presumptuous? whether it does not involve a degree of limiting and defining not a little at variance with the ideas we must necessarily entertain of the infinite and unsearchable incomprehensibility of the Divine Essence; and equally so with the consciousness we ought to feel of our own limited powers, and our incapacity to apprehend things so immeasurably beyond our sphere.

(16.) II. But we have now to turn our attention to the views of those who misrepresent the truth, by *going beyond* what the letter of Scripture teaches. In this respect, that the Unitarian perversions of Scripture are not at all more rational than many of the dogmas which the Church of Rome sanctions or professes on the subject of the Divine nature, will be evident to any one who is acquainted with the tenets of the respective parties. The corruption of the simplicity of Scripture truth by the Romish writers, so noto-

rious in many other points, is far from inconsiderable, in reference to this. And the Church of Rome has justly laid herself open to the charge of framing, or authorizing the statement of this divine mystery in terms more precise than the language of Scripture will warrant, and of making faith rest upon those terms and niceties, instead of the simple declarations of the Bible. If we look into the history of theological inquiry, in those ages when the Romish usurpations were most powerful and extensive, we find in all the writers who flourished within her pale, and in all the controversies which were agitated among her divines, an universally prevalent spirit of metaphysical refinement; a propensity to involve the simple statements of Scripture in all the perplexities of an abstruse technical jargon. The Church of Rome was the parent, or at least the patroness of the scholastic theology. By the professors of that system, questions were raised and resolved with the greatest familiarity, on subjects which as far transcend the power of human abilities to determine, as of human language to state. (*See notes.*)

The faults which thus characterize the Romish theology, however different the doctrines to which they lead may be in detail from those of the Unitarian Creed, are yet in their principle precisely similar to those which belong to the professors of this system. The Socinian and the

scholastic theologians alike pervert the word of revelation by the refinements of abstruse speculation: they equally attempt to subject the doctrines of Scripture concerning the Deity to the standard of some metaphysical theory: though their results lie in two opposite extremes of error, yet the principle on which they set out is absolutely the same.

(17.) But over-refinement upon the principles of human reason, in matters of faith, is not the whole accusation we have to bring against the Church of Rome, nor her only point of resemblance to the Unitarian heresy. The decisions of the Councils, upon which her creed is built, are, in reference to the doctrines in question, both inconsistent among themselves, and in several instances at variance with the plain tenor of the word of God, and exhibiting undisguised Arianism. Yet these councils were, according to her tenets, all equally infallible; and the Romanist equally professes his belief in them all. These matters of fact are sufficiently notorious to all who are in any degree acquainted with ecclesiastical history; and the argument deducible from them has been urged with such force and success against the Papists, by several eminent writers, that I conceive it superfluous here to enter further upon it. I would only observe in general, that, independently of the heretical opinions inculcated, it must be evident that amid such fluctu-

ation and inconsistency of principle, no definite or certain rule and standard of faith can be found, nor on such decisions can any rational ground of belief be established. (*See notes.*)

(18.) But besides any such charge as that of unwarrantably corrupting the Scripture doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Church of Rome has justly subjected herself to the imputation of another crime of a more heinous description, but differing little in its principle from the last. Abstruse niceties on such subjects are to be objected to on the ground that they frame a more exact account of the Divine nature than we have any right to frame in consistency with a just humility and a reverential belief in Scripture. And what is this but forming to ourselves an image of the Deity, according to our own conceptions of Him? and wherein does this differ from that other remarkable and offensive practice of the Church of Rome, the admission and use of pictures and images of the Supreme Being, represented under the similitude of the human form? The sin of idolatry, it is to be observed, consists in two particulars, one the forming an image or similitude, which we intend to represent the Deity, and the other the act of offering religious adoration to any image or object which is not God; so that though it should be contended that those images admitted by the Romish Church are not worshipped, but merely used to excite and ele-

vate devotion, yet still the sin remains of daring to represent, under a human or any other form, Him who is invisible and spiritual. And while the Romish Church is justly condemned for worshipping the images of saints and martyrs, which constitutes one branch of the sin of idolatry, it is frequently forgotten that she is guilty also of what is perhaps the more heinous part of the offence, in admitting as solemn ornaments to her places of worship, even though they be not objects of adoration, the conceptions of human artists, as representing Him who is incomprehensible, and whom "no man hath seen nor can see *."

The sublime compositions of Raffaele are, as is well known, in some instances stained with this offensive impropriety: and many other examples will immediately occur to those acquainted with the works of those eminent masters whose genius has been fostered in the corruptions of their idolatrous religion. That frequent subject of sculpture, the Father with the dead Christ, which occurs as the ornament of many altarpieces, may even be open to the imputation of leading the conceptions astray as to the mystery of the Divine Persons; and, we may ask, whether in thus representing two distinct beings, the mind of the spectator is not insensibly led to separate those Divine Persons who are essentially united; and thus to commence a deviation

* 1 Tim. vi. 16. Deut. iv. 12. 15, &c.

from the simple Scriptural faith, the ultimate extent of whose progress it may be difficult to foresee?

(19.) III. The enthusiast, in his doctrinal system, has perhaps no peculiarities respecting the mysteries of the Divine nature. But then the fact is, that he is so urgently hurried on by the glowing fervor of his imagination to a communion with God and a sensible participation in the overpowering influence of the Holy Spirit, that he cannot stop to trace the course of his religious belief, from its first principles in regular order up to its more recondite doctrines. He probably has seldom leisure, from his spiritual exercises, to contemplate or examine calmly the grounds of faith. To inquire into the evidences of truth, or the correctness of particular doctrines, is a task too dull and laborious for his flighty disposition. To a mind illuminated like his, there is in fact no such thing as any mystery in religion. All its truths instead of being as they are to others, impressions upon the rational understanding, are to him sensations excited in the feelings, and at once present to the mind. Of truths admitted from without, and judged of by reasoning, there may be, and must be, different sorts; some clear and definite, others obscure and mysterious; but between truths which are nothing but internal sensations, the result of irresistible illumination, there can be no distinction in this respect. They are all alike felt and experienced; and if

the simplest doctrine of the Gospel or of reason become thus a matter of mere vague feeling, working up the mind to the highest pitch of fanaticism, the more recondite mysteries are no less sensibly and intimately conceived, and can have in them nothing more indefinite or mysterious to the enthusiast's apprehension than the others. His system, in fact, sublimates the most common and simple truths into unspeakable wonders: he cannot read the most plain and practical precept of an inspired writer without immediately finding it enveloped in a cloud of spiritual mysticism. Those truths, then, which by others are justly regarded as of a peculiarly awful and sublime character, are by the enthusiast viewed in no other light than that in which he contemplates every other religious idea—they are to him as familiar as any other doctrine, or any practical feeling. (*See notes.*)

(20.) And we may ask, is not this a derogation from the sacred character, which we ought to ascribe to divine mysteries? Is it consistent with the reverence due to the Divine Being to permit ourselves this familiarity with him? No one acquainted with the language of enthusiastic devotion can help feeling disgust at the trivial and familiar style of expression which too often prevails in the mode of holding communion with God. And what is this but a presumptuous attempt to penetrate that awful cloud of mystery

with which his heavenly and ineffable nature is obscured from our sight? What is it but to overlook the distinction between what He has pleased to make known of *Himself*, and what He has taught us of *ourselves*?

The familiar form of worship with which the fanatic addresses *his* God and *his* Saviour, differs in fact but little in its character, or in its degree of presumption, from the sin of framing an image or idea of God after the conceit of his own heart. In either case there is a more sensible representation and perception, as it were, of the object of worship, than can be warranted by revealed authority. Wherein then is the difference between the worship of the Romanist and of the enthusiast? The one forms an image of God with his hands, the other in his heart:—the one contemplates the representation of Him whom eye hath not seen, with his bodily sight:—the other sets before his thoughts a visionary image of Him whom the heart cannot conceive.

(21.) But the cold speculatist has no reverential love to address to his Creator and Redeemer, his belief is all philosophical theory; and if it were correct in theory, would still be utterly deficient as to its practical application. He nevertheless frames his theory with the view of obtaining a clearer knowledge of the Divine nature; and therein he like the others is no better than an idolater. While he flees from the images of

enthusiasm and superstition, he bows before that of delusive hypothesis and imaginary simplicity. He cannot rest satisfied without a Deity whom he can comprehend : as if the very idea were not a contradiction in terms ; and the wish to find such a Deity as irrational as the propensity to go after idols, or to create an idol in the heart.

But against the plain and rational believer in Scripture none of these accusations can be brought. He is content to believe without requiring such sensible representatives : his worship is a worship of reason, and does not derive its life and support from mere impressions on the senses, or mere impulses on the feelings ; though on the other hand he is far from rejecting or despising the use of such means of exciting and enlivening devotion, under becoming regulation. His religious belief and religious service differ equally from that of the cold theorist and the infatuated enthusiast, whose idolatry is mental, and from that of the votary of a ceremonial superstition, whose idolatry is external.

These are alike irrational and unscriptural in their worship. The truly rational and Scriptural worshipper trusts no more to any idea of the Deity which is the work of his own understanding, than he would to any representation set before the senses, or to any image the offspring of an over-heated imagination. He acknowledges the wisdom of the apostolic advice, “ not to intrude

into those things which he hath not seen, being vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind*." He requires no theoretical simplification, in order to attain to a conception of Him whose infinitude the finite mind of man cannot comprehend. He sees that any such apparent simplicity must be mere delusion. He acknowledges that the only safe mode of belief must be to rest contented with representations which, though very indefinite, are yet to be received on the most certain assurance, and are fully sufficient for cherishing the best practical feelings, and enforcing the various resulting duties.

* Col. ii. 18.

SECTION III.

ON RATIONAL VIEWS OF THE DOCTRINES RESPECTING THE DIVINE DISPENSATIONS IN REGARD TO OUR SPIRITUAL STATE.

- § 1. 1. Rational principles of enquiry. Scripture gives a peculiar scheme. In reference to the views to be taken of it,—
- 1st. To examine what previous principles we have on which to reason.
2. 1. Ideas respecting the Divine Attributes.
- 3—5. These derived solely in the way of induction.
6. Hence no ground for interpreting revealed doctrines.
7. Application to the doctrine of future condemnation.
- 8—10. Argument from the existence of evil.
11. 2. No information relative to the ultimate designs of the Deity.
12. Hence no data—to be guided solely by revelation.
- 13, 14. 3. Moral system as deduced by reason: very limited, especially as referred to the Deity.

15. No ground of argument.
16. 2dly. Thus coming to Scripture to enquire with caution.
17. Inductive principles confine us to the literal sense.
18. General remarks on such a view.
19. II. Examination of other systems.
 - 1st. The Unitarian scheme.
20. 1. Emptiness of pretended direct proofs of this hypothesis.
21. 2. Only remaining proof its supposed greater simplicity.

Presumption of attempts to simplify.
Greater simplicity an insufficient proof if real.
22. 3. But in reality, no greater simplicity.

The Unitarian views equally mysterious with the literal doctrine: in various instances;—as respecting,
23. The existence of evil:
24. Providence:
25. Prescience and free agency:
26. The moral principle:
27. The miracles of the New Testament:
28. Future state and remedial punishments: mode of purification inexplicable: gratuitous theory: contrary to Unitarian view of Divine benevolence.

- 29. Nature of human soul.
- 30. Materialism and immaterialism.
- 31. The existence of objects and of ourselves.
Thus no advantage gained by the Unitarian scheme.
- 32. 2ndly. Comparison of Unitarianism with the opposite systems.
- 33. The most important doctrines alike perverted.
 - 1. Original sin : virtually done away by fanatics : and by Romanists.
- 34. 2. Future punishments : purgatory : Romish arguments rendered inefficient by fanatics.
- 35. 3. Redemption : comparison of Romish and fanatical errors.
- 36. Each system derogatory to revelation.
- 37. Illiberality and exclusive character of each.
- 38. Enthusiasm derogatory to the dignity of Christ :
Popery the same.
- 39. 4. Justification : comparison of Unitarian and Romish views.
Fanatical perversion.
True faith not by sense.
Romish perversions.

40. 5. Influence of Holy Spirit: equally
perverted by each system.
41. Each tends to spiritual pride.
42. Good practical tendency a mark of
true religion.
43. In this each of the opposing extremes
deficient: good tendency of pure
Scriptural faith.

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(1.) I. From the consideration of the primary doctrine of all religion, we naturally pass to the system of subordinate doctrines dependant upon this, and which bear an immediate reference to ourselves. Perhaps when the former doctrine is once admitted, there is not in general any great hesitation in receiving those of the latter class also. In fact, so closely are all the parts of the Scripture scheme interwoven with each other, that it is impossible consistently to embrace one doctrine without the rest.

The Scripture doctrine of the Divine nature is by no means proposed for our belief as an abstract speculative truth. The intimations of these mysteries are never given but in disclosing some part of the Divine counsels relating to us, and to the great scheme which (if we take the Scripture in its literal sense,) is developed by supreme wisdom and goodness for our salvation; which gives us a peculiar view of our own nature, state, and condition; of our moral obligations and our relations to one another and to God, arising out of that condition; and of the prospects which await us in another state of existence, and the grounds on which our future condition is to be determined.

It is, as being thus intimately connected with the most essential and vital parts of practical religion, that the doctrines of the Divine nature

become of such peculiar importance, and that the preservation of this article of faith pure and uncorrupt, is so necessary to the maintenance of sound Christianity.

1. But upon the topics of the relation in which we stand to our Creator, our moral state, and future prospects, the speculations of the rationalists have been no less extensively exercised than on those already considered. A few remarks, therefore, on the ideas we are able to form on these points by the light of reason;—on the data we can have it in our power to assume on which to argue;—on the entire ignorance rather in which we are involved, antecedently to revelation,—will be necessary in order to following up the inquiry into the pretensions of the self-called rational system of Christianity, as well as those of the opposing systems, which alike deviate, though in such entirely different ways from the path of Scripture truth.

In considering and comparing the various doctrines exhibited to our view in Scripture, we deduce, taking them in their literal sense, a *peculiar* scheme of the Divine dispensations towards us, in reference to our spiritual state and relations.

The doctrines of Scripture to which our attention is now to be directed, may be reduced to two general heads, those of the condemnation and the restoration of man. It is in reference to

two such states or conditions, that the literal declarations of Scripture unquestionably describe the Divine dispensations. They represent man as falling into the one state, and by the effect of the ordained consequences of Divine justice involved in perdition: yet, on the other hand, they display the Deity, in his attribute of mercy, offering the means of deliverance from this condition, and of admission to a state of favor and happiness.

(2.) 1. In all discussion respecting what are to be considered rational interpretations of these doctrines, reference is made to our ideas of the Divine attributes. It is upon the assumption of certain views of these attributes that our opponents argue. On this ground, therefore, as well as the general importance of so doing, we must, in the first instance, carefully examine the sort of idea we form of those attributes. Thus we shall be able to define the terms about which we argue.

The idea which we form by reason of the Author of Nature is a very complex one. It includes those of some of the principal attributes. We shall, then, be able to define these attributes by examining how we arrive at these ideas. The observation of the natural world impresses us with a conviction of design in its arrangements—of power to execute them—of their general beneficial result: hence our ideas of corresponding at-

tributes in the Author of Nature ; and the use of the analogical terms wisdom, power, beneficence, &c. : hence our idea of any one attribute, e. g. that of beneficence, is derived from considering and putting together all the particular effects observable in the arrangement of the natural world, which obviously tend to its good. Putting all these together, we say that those arrangements display beneficence. But this idea of the beneficence of the Author of Nature is dependent upon our idea of good : this is collected from our experience and the observation of what appears to be for the good of other creatures. But our conclusion will be very incomplete unless, in thus forming it, we also take into account all apparent exceptions. It would not be true to say that all the arrangements of nature tend to the good of every creature ; because we see much apparent evil mixed with the good, and we know by reflection that there are many sorts of evil which tend to no further result of good. So that our true idea of beneficence, as displayed in the order of nature, must be qualified by this observation of the existence of evil : and we must frame our analogical term so that it shall not be understood otherwise than as including a certain portion of evil mixed up with the good : a sort of beneficence including the permission of a certain degree of evil. (*See notes.*)

(3.) But, proceeding from the phenomena of nature, we now come to those of supernatural interference: these attest revelation. If we are intent on completing our idea of the attribute of beneficence, we must further examine the consequences of this new class of phenomena, and enquire whether any thing is here developed which will oblige us to modify and enlarge our ideas as already formed. In revelation we find the Deity making himself more known to us, in manifold dispensations. All these are to be taken into account in order to complete our inductive ideas of his attributes. And whatever inference we make from these dispensations must be carefully combined with those before deduced, so that out of all put together we may frame our collective idea of this attribute of beneficence. If here we find evil displayed as well as good, we must still go on as before, limiting and qualifying our previous imperfect ideas, by those which we now acquire, in order to making up the full idea to which, in the present state of our knowledge, we can attain.

(4.) It will thus be evident that, to a correct definition of this or any other attribute, it is essential that no particular, either in the Divine operations, or in what he permits without being the author of it, be omitted. From the collective evidence we frame our ideas of beneficence. We have no right to derive our ideas of this or

any Divine attribute from a few insulated facts. We must take into account all which are laid before us; and this without prepossession. Every fact which may appear incongruous is to be brought forward without hesitation; and every dispensation regarding good and evil to be contemplated, whether it be accordant or not with what we had previously determined. Thus we are to limit our idea at first derived as a sort of approximation to the true one. Thus will it become perfected: and our definition must faithfully represent the idea thus circumscribed.

(5.) We know nothing of the essential nature either of the Divine justice or the Divine benevolence, except just so much as is deducible from the few instances of the operation of those attributes which fall under our cognizance. We are acquainted with them only in their partial manifestation to us; and we name them only by mere analogy from those partial views.

It will thus be to a very limited extent only, and in a very few instances, that we can presume to make any inference from our notion of these attributes, as to what may or may not be consistent with them. We know nothing of the ultimate designs of the Deity in regard to man, except just so far as we may receive such information as he may be pleased to communicate. And the scriptural representations are very general and indefinite. They evince a wisdom far

superior to that of enthusiasm or imposture, in offering nothing to satisfy a vain and useless curiosity, by giving any minute and particular description of that future state in which it is declared mankind are hereafter to exist : nor do they admit us into the secret counsels of the Most High, or the schemes of his providence for the government of the world.

(6.) Upon such topics, then, we may well abstain from going into any arguments deduced from our notions of the Divine perfections. And, considering the absolute ignorance in which we are involved respecting the whole subject, we must surely admit the extreme impropriety of attempting to argue as to what the Divine counsels *are*, from what we conceive they *might be*.

We must come to the examination of the revealed declarations on such subjects with a spirit of entire humility ; with a cautious circumspection, lest, trusting to our preconceived notions, we should be led into dangerous fallacies : but rather, relying implicitly on our Divine Guide, take our information from what Scripture teaches, and conform our previous ideas to that standard. Our business, in short, is to collect our notions of the Divine attributes from the declarations of revelation ; not to interpret the doctrines of revelation in accordance with our ideas of the attributes.

(7.) The subject of the Divine attributes is referred to chiefly in connection with the scripture doctrine of the eternal condemnation of those who continue in sin. This doctrine has, for obvious reasons, been particularly exposed to the attacks of objectors—both those who seek pretences for rejecting religion altogether, and those who merely wish to accommodate it to their own convenience. The latter class argue against this doctrine on an assumption that it is contrary to the Divine perfections, especially the Divine benevolence. Hence they attempt to explain away the scriptural declarations, and make them convey some meaning not involving the idea of “*everlasting punishment* *,” in what they are pleased to call the vulgar acceptance of the term.

From what has been already observed, it appears to me that we can, in strictness of reasoning, have no ground whatever on which to deduce any such contradiction from our ideas of the Divine benevolence.

But there is yet another consideration to which I must (as briefly as possible) advert, which appears to me to shew, in a yet stronger manner, how totally destitute of foundation any such abstract arguments must be.

* Matt. xxv, 16.

(8.) This is deduced from the incontestable fact of the existence of much absolute evil in the present world, and the acknowledged impossibility of reconciling it with any ideas *we can frame* of infinite benevolence. Whether we consider *absolute* evil, such as sin and its consequences, and perhaps some kinds of bodily suffering, or evil out of which good is produced, the same remarks will apply. For, according to the rationalist's own mode of arguing, if the design of Providence be to produce a beneficial result; Almighty Power could easily produce that result at once, without the intervention of evil: so that the existence of evil still remains to be accounted for. According to the opponents' favourite principle of adopting the most simple theory, and that which is most conformable to antecedent congruity, it would be a simpler system that good should be produced in the world, and moral virtue perfected, without any admission of evil or suffering—without the permission of the misery and crime which at present prevails, mixed up in so inseparable a manner with the constituted order of things, and originating in a great degree from an inherent proneness to sin in the human heart. This being certainly the more complex system, we might expect that the rationalist would, as in other cases, wish to get rid of it; and so, perhaps,

attempt to explain away the facts, and to make out that pain, sin, and evil, are not realities. But since we do not find this mode of explanation ever attempted, we may suppose that no necessity for it is felt. The facts are neither controverted nor explained away. Thus, then, no ground of argument is pretended for finding any thing contradictory in the existence and operation of some sorts of absolute evil, in connection with the acknowledged beneficence of the Deity. Hence there can be no ground for finding such contradiction in extending the admission to any other sorts of evil. For neither the magnitude, the nature, nor the duration of the evil can make any difference as to the application of the inference. If there be nothing at variance with infinite goodness in the evils of whose existence we are assured by experience, then also the same thing must be conceded in reference to any other evils which may be intimated in the letter of revelation, as operating in the world to come.

(9.) If the inconsistency of future punishments with the Divine benevolence be urged, on the ground that those punishments consist of evil absolute, unmixed and incapable of producing any further effect of good to the condemned, then precisely the same objection must be made to the existence of many kinds of suffering in

this world which are, in this respect, exactly similar to the former : yet for such objections no ground is discovered.

But it is, perhaps, said that the cases are not similar in regard to the relative *magnitude* of the evil permitted or inflicted. But surely it would be as contrary to infinite benevolence, according to the *rational* idea of it, to permit one evil as another, if they were both equally unattended with any good consequences. And yet, further, if we adopt the rationalist's conception of the Divine benevolence, by supposing the human feeling of benevolence extended to infinity, it will follow that the more infinite the benevolence, the less will it be possible for that benevolence to consist with the permission of the smallest conceivable degree of absolute evil or suffering ; and still more so when we suppose that infinite benevolence, joined with infinite power, which might order all things without the least admixture of evil. Thus the smallest degree of suffering would be just as incompatible with the attribute of benevolence as the greatest.

The objection against future punishment proceeds on the ground of the utter hopelessness of the condition of the condemned, and that no ultimate good effect can ever result from it. But surely this total absence of good being in any one instance admitted (as we have seen it is) as not incompatible with the attribute of benefi-

cence, it will make no difference whether, in any other instance, the evil be of greater magnitude or longer duration : since whatever objection might be conceived in such cases, would vanish if it could be made to appear that any ulterior good was to result from evil of whatever magnitude.

(10.) But it may be further said, that the difference in the *duration* of the two sorts of absolute evil will alter the case. Upon the same principle, however, we may safely reply, that in respect of infinite benevolence this would be no more a ground of difference than the unequal magnitudes of the evils. And, yet further, we have to observe, that when considered in reference to a Being of infinite perfections, with whom "One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," we derogate from those perfections if we suppose that there can be any difference between what to us are different durations, between time and eternity, to his all-seeing comprehension : so that temporal evil would be not less offensive in his sight than eternal.

Thus, all the objections which are brought against the doctrine of future punishment, apply equally to present evils. We are convinced both of the existence of a Deity of infinite perfections, and of the impossibility of reconciling, in our narrow conceptions, the existence of evil with those perfections. We thus perceive that all

arguments are nugatory for finding any inconsistency in this case: we have, consequently, no ground for assuming any such arguments in respect to future evils; and must admit that there is some fallacy in our mode of reasoning—a fallacy which obviously consists in the assumption with which we set out, arguing about the Divine benevolence on mere hypothetical ideas of that attribute.

(11.) 2. While we have no other guide than the light of reason, we may infer certain principles of moral duty: we may infer perhaps certain moral perfections in the Deity: we may, from combining these two sorts of considerations, argue with a certain degree of probability, that the Deity will approve and reward virtue, and disapprove and punish vice. But this conclusion will be both uncertain in its force, and very vague in its meaning and application.

Again, we may lay down some sort of definition of good; and we may infer goodness and benevolence in the Deity: hence we may, perhaps, by a very slender chain of inference, be led to some sort of persuasion, that the Deity wills and ordains only what is for our real good, but beyond these very few partial, limited, and, after all, doubtful inferences, we learn nothing; and can have no ground on which to build any arguments for or against the probability of any further dispensation from God to man.

We neither know, nor can know, any thing of what the ultimate designs of the Deity may be respecting us; or of the nature and efficacy of the means which may be adopted for carrying those designs into effect.

(12.) If we come to revelation as contained in the Scriptures, we find our view of the points just touched upon, considerably more clear and certain.

We find here a perfect law of right and wrong: we find much more definitive statements concerning the divine attributes, so far as they relate to us; and we are not left to combine together these considerations so as merely to possess uncertain inferences from them, but we are told, in plain and express terms, and upon the most solemn assurances, that the Deity most positively does forbid, and will severely punish, all vice and wickedness, and does command, and will most graciously reward, obedience and holiness.

We have also in these writings the ultimate good described, in terms sufficiently plain for all practical purposes; and we are expressly assured, that all the designs of the Deity work together for our good, according to the scriptural representation of good. So that here is nothing indefinite or uncertain, nothing doubtful or conjectural: but, the authority of the book once admitted, we have, just within the limits of these few import-

ant points, as much positive definite instruction as can be necessary for the purposes for which the Scripture represents such instruction to be given. But beyond these limits we have no more information than we had before. We still know nothing of the ultimate nature of the divine attributes, or of the designs and counsels of the Divine Wisdom.

(13.) 3. It accords with our notion of a Being infinite in perfections, to conceive a God of perfect holiness, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; but of the ultimate essence of holiness or virtue we know nothing, except so far as we may condescend and bow our proud spirits to receive his instructions. By the exercise of unassisted reason, we can attain to nothing more than a few practical truths respecting the necessity of following some few precepts, and cultivating some few dispositions, which we infer it will be to our own good, and to the good of society, to do. Upon these we may reason, and form systems of ethics; we may deduce the theoretical principles of the ordinary duties between man and man; and we may lay down the hypothesis of moral excellence in the individual, in conformity with which the passions are to be moderated. But all this will not bring us nearer to the ultimate principle of goodness; nor teach us whether that theory which we have deduced in morals, will comprise all that is to be known.

We may find that our ethical system is consistent in itself, and sufficient to explain, on one principle, the various ramifications of necessary duty; but still we remain in entire ignorance as to whether there be not something beyond: some higher principle to which we have yet to ascend. We have still to learn whether the whole of our ethical system, admitting it to be complete and satisfactory in itself, may not be merely a subordinate part, in some infinitely greater system.

(14.) And if such limits confine us, when we consider merely virtue and vice in the abstract, much more shall we have to confess our insufficiency, when we view the subject in connection with our knowledge of the Deity.

It is perhaps a conclusion, as I have already observed, to which reason may guide us, that the Deity will approve of virtuous, and disapprove of vicious conduct. But this is only an inference from what we observe of the effects of his goodness and beneficence in the ordering of this world; an inference which is surely deduced upon a very slender chain of reasoning. But, even admitting it, we must confess that we know nothing whatever of the principle (so to speak) upon which the Deity is supposed to found that approbation. We neither perceive, nor can perceive the object, nor in any degree understand the counsels in reference to which the distinction is made. We cannot presume to say a

priori, whether any, or what, further design there may be, of which our practical moral system may form a part; or what relation the one may bear to the other.

(15.) The nature of the divine designs and counsels, and modes of operation, being thus hidden from us in their essential parts and ultimate principle, and all that we know of them being limited to a very few particulars relative to the effects of such designs for our good, we deduce this inference, that we have in these cases no ground whatever on which to argue *à priori*, as to what would or would not be reasonable to be understood and believed respecting the divine dispensations; excepting just so far as that we might mistrust any interpretation put upon the words of revelation, which should give a meaning obviously at variance with what we positively know of the divine attributes, or with the expressed object of his revelations. (See notes.)

Again, when we look into ourselves, we are constrained to admit that of our spiritual state and condition we can comprehend little or nothing. What we can most clearly discern, because it is most constantly and unavoidably set before our eyes, is the frailty and sinfulness of our nature. And very little reflection upon ourselves will convince us of the truth of that doctrine of revelation, which assures us that

there is a principle of corruption inherent in us. But of any spiritual condition or relation, in which we may stand in any other respect, the mere exercise of reason can teach us almost nothing. The very general and vague belief, that we are subject to the will and power of our Creator, can give us no ground whatever for arguing, *à priori*, as to what further relation may or may not subsist between him and his creatures: much less can any conclusion do so which we may derive from a contemplation of our own nature, and the moral affections or intellectual powers whose exercise we observe within us.

(16.) 2. Thus, then, it is sufficiently evident, that we come to the enquiry, as to what the Scripture teaches of our spiritual state and relations, in no condition to reason *à priori*. It is clear that we have no general principles on which to determine the congruity or incongruity of what Scripture may declare with any real views or conclusions of reason. This is equally the case whether we regard the Divine attributes, our own condition, or our moral principles. Thus we approach revelation without the shadow of a pretence for finding any difficulties or objections in what may be there propounded respecting the Divine dealings with man. And the points just specified are precisely those the consideration of which is involved in the scriptural

representations. It is only from assumptions respecting some of these points that any views can be maintained at variance with the literal doctrine: and such assumptions must be wholly unfounded.

(17.) If there be any one subject of enquiry on which, more than on another, the most extreme care and caution in forming our opinions are requisite, it is surely the subject of religious belief. With whatever views we enter upon any question connected with it, the high importance of the enquiry is always implied and admitted; nor can it need many arguments to shew the peculiar and momentous interest which must attach to the circumstance of our attaining, if possible, correct views of the real doctrines of that system, by which our future condition is to be determined, as well as our happiness in this life materially affected. And, we may ask, what rule of caution can be more effectual; by what path can we proceed with greater security; what can be a mode of investigation more consonant with every admitted principle of enquiry in the most accurate species of intellectual research; or more obviously dictated by practical common sense, than that mode of circumspect enquiry into the doctrine of Scripture, which has been recommended and enforced. A method which, acknowledging the utter insufficiency and presumption of all attempts to go beyond the limits

of what is written, leads us carefully to collect and compare the different assertions of the sacred writers; and, not taking any doctrine as sole and insulated, but comparing it with others, to express the whole resulting truth, as made up of the several parts modified by each other.

Such, I contend, must be the line of conduct pursued by the truly rational and cautious enquirer after religious truth: a mode of investigation equally called for by the importance and the difficulty of the subject. No where can such caution be more necessary than in reference to subjects like those to which the Scriptures relate; subjects in which, as we cannot attain to any knowledge of the ultimate and general principles, we may be led astray by a thousand unfounded suppositions; we may build and unbuild innumerable systems in succession all equally unstable; and, what is worse, systems whose instability may possibly involve us and our eternal interests in their fall. The awful prospect of another state, or even the fearful blank of an unknown obscurity, are not vacancies which we can fill up with any chance creations of our fancy; they are not subjects with safety to be trifled with, in attempts to simplify the views which may be taken of them. The vast interval between man and his Creator is not to be filled up with an imaginary system of relation. The connection is not to be formed through a

medium established by our imagination. All such empty fictions are here utterly misplaced; they cannot be relied upon as affording any solid satisfaction; and they may be most dangerous deceits. On the contrary, the only alternative we have is either to remain in absolute ignorance and obscurity, without hope of deliverance; or, to seek diligently for whatever real light may be afforded us; to enquire carefully for the true path, not venturing upon any uncertain track, but following closely and cautiously whatever certain indications we can satisfactorily discover. Such, in a case of this difficulty and emergency, is surely the only reasonable course to be pursued. But how entirely is this opposed to the principles and systems of the pretenders to rational religion. And how uncertain and unsafe must those principles and systems in consequence be. How entirely gratuitous are all suppositions respecting the antecedent reasonableness of a simple system of Monotheism and mere morality; and how presumptuous the idea that God will accept such a religious service, because man has determined that it is reasonable it should be accepted. Into what fearful and innumerable errors may not such rash speculations lead us. But how safe, on the other hand, is the humbler religion of him who follows, with a reasonable reliance on his guide, the path of scripture truth, though he neither comprehend

its direction nor be able to take any other than the most confined survey of the vast regions through which it carries him.

(18.) To enter upon any discussion or even statement of the scriptural scheme of the Divine dispensations, in regard to the spiritual state of man, would be wholly disproportionate to the present design. All that I shall attempt to do is to make one or two general remarks on the subject.

In the first place, we have to observe, that revelation grounds the whole scheme upon certain mysterious relations between the persons of the Godhead. If, therefore, the primary doctrine respecting the Divine nature has once been admitted, there cannot be the shadow of a pretence for objecting to the further relation and mutual agency thus represented to subsist between the Divine Persons. The first being confessedly an incomprehensible mystery, the second is but involved in the same impenetrable obscurity. Nor, in fact, is this second portion of the Scripture doctrine, generally speaking, ever objected to when the first has been admitted. So that, on this ground, it will be the less necessary to enter upon any discussion respecting it.

Again, when we find in the Scripture view of the Divine counsels the operation of Divine mercy opposed to that of Divine justice; when we find it all along maintained and held up to

our admiration and gratitude that these attributes, in a hidden and mysterious manner, harmonize and work together to the accomplishment of infinitely great and beneficent ends; we cannot but recollect, as putting a most decisive check on all excursions of reason into such mysterious subjects, that whatever variance may appear to subsist in such representations to ill-instructed minds, it cannot be greater than that which must of necessity subsist between the primary ideas of infinite justice and infinite beneficence—of infinite power and infinite goodness co-existing in the same all-perfect Being: yet these are among the surest convictions of reason, admitted and dwelt upon with the utmost particularity by the follower of rational opinions.

We find the Scripture, in its literal sense, asserting and recognizing all the truths and precepts of morality; but putting them all upon an entirely new principle. We find it maintaining the obedience due from man to God, as an entirely dependent creature; but we find this relation explained to a much wider extent. We learn the origin and fearful consequences of the operation of that principle of corruption, which experience compels us to observe within us. We perceive the condemnation in which the whole human race is involved, as the penalty of sin. We find a corrupt nature inherited from the first Adam, and a spiritual and immortal from Christ,

the second Adam : faith in him made the condition of a restoration to the footing of original innocence ; and sanctification by the Holy Spirit the moving principle of all that is holy and good in us.

From these cursory remarks on the general scheme of Scripture doctrine, it will probably be admitted that the literal reception of those doctrines has been sufficiently vindicated from the charge of involving any thing unreasonable or contradictory. And, as we are not in possession of any data on which to found abstract arguments, then, upon sound principles of reason, we must adopt the literal doctrine, in preference to any theoretical sense which may be given to it by any other interpretation, however plausible.

(19.) II. In order to follow up this portion of the subject, it will be necessary to advert to such systems and interpretations as are set up by several parties respecting the doctrines of the divine dispensations, and which are alike departures from the simple belief in the literal declarations of Scripture. And a few remarks, tending to put such systems in comparison with that which has been already upheld as the truly reasonable one, will, I trust, suffice for making out satisfactorily that they are all equally deficient in the characteristics which we have found essential to constitute a reasonable system of belief.

1st. In the first place, we have to examine the hypothesis of the professed disciple of reason, in regard to the doctrines of the Christian scheme.

(20.) 1. From the tenor of the preceding portions of these remarks, it has, I conceive, been sufficiently shewn that there can be no foundation for any assumption of such primary and immutable principles of truth and reason, as those of which our opponents make such boast. It has been fully pointed out, that we can have no ground on which to deduce *à priori*, any sort of conclusion, as to what *must* be the principle of moral obligation, or the relation of man to his Creator, or the consequences of our notions of the divine attributes. Any such immutable axioms as those on which the rationalist frames his theory, must be of the nature of such conclusions. They must in consequence be altogether nugatory.

To deduce any such principles or general rules *à posteriori*, it would be obviously necessary to take into consideration every fact, and every apparent exception, before any such principle could be universal. This would be nothing less than the truly reasonable proceeding of taking into account all the truths of revelation. They partake in the same evidence as that on which the divine authority of Scripture rests. They have therefore the evidence of facts.

Thus then, since from what has been before

urged, the opponent must concede that the Scripture doctrine, when literally taken, does not involve any contradiction ; the only ground upon which he can reasonably reject it, must be that of some other facts, or truths, directly opposed to it. And it will clearly be necessary that these truths must possess at least as much evidence and proof as the Scripture possesses, in reference to its claim to a divine origin. Instead of this, however, we have seen that there is no sort of proof of them whatever. Yet, when such proof and evidence can be made out, then, and then only, will it be consistent with any sound rules of reasoning, that the enquirer should feel himself at liberty to make comparisons between the two different views of any doctrine ; and to reject the one, because it involves topics beyond the powers of the human mind to comprehend ; and maintain the other, because it appears less difficult to conceive ; supposing such facility to be really attained by the substitution.

(21.) 2. Since, then, no such opposite system can be in the slightest degree substantiated, the only remaining plea for the rejection of the scheme of salvation, as literally declared in Scripture,—the whole argument of the rationalist, for explaining it away, resolves itself into this ; that the literal interpretation is *more complicated* than the system he would propose. He cannot conceive why so vast and complex a

scheme should have been adopted for the pardon and restoration of man, when the sole declaration of the Divine will might (as he thinks) have been sufficient to confer on the guilty race their full forgiveness and reconciliation.

After the repeated references we have already had occasion to make to our ignorance of the Divine nature and counsels, and the extreme arrogance and presumption of venturing to argue from what would antecedently be conformable to our ideas of them, it can hardly be necessary here to recur again to such arguments in order to shew the futility of such a mode of reasoning as that just adverted to.

To form ideas at all as to what the Deity might or might not do, is in itself the most presumptuous folly, in such a creature as man: and it is equalled only in absurdity by taking such notions as a rule whereby to judge of the reasonableness of the doctrines of revelation.

But, even supposing the nature of the subject were not such as to involve this profane presumption, and judging of the mode of argument by ordinary rules—it is not the *simplicity* of a particular view or theory of any subject which will prove it to be the *true* explanation, or even make it preferable to another more complex statement, if that statement have clear and sufficient evidence in its support. If this mode of reasoning were admitted, what would become of the whole

system of experimental philosophy? of what value or use would be the sagacious rules of Bacon? what truth would there be in the Newtonian system of the universe? A circle is a simpler curve than an ellipse; the planets therefore ought to be believed to move in circles, instead of ellipses. Legitimate theories in philosophy must be framed solely in accordance to facts. Of those theories which the facts will admit, we undoubtedly are right in choosing the simplest: but to this preference for simplicity, not a particle of fact must be sacrificed. And thus in the case before us, since in order to adopt the hypothesis of the rationalist, we must reject or explain away a large portion of the scriptural facts, in order to obtain that simplicity of doctrine at which he aims, it will be evident that we are proceeding in the most unphilosophical course; and that the only correct and rational way of framing a theory, is to frame it upon the general expression of all the particular facts; that is, in this case, all the particular doctrinal assertions: to make it rest on the collective basis of all the scriptural expressions: this being the only way by which we can attain to real simplicity of doctrine, and that simplicity will consist in no other general views of the Scripture scheme, than those which Scripture itself opens to us.

(22.) 3. But now, after all, we have to observe that if all the principles on which a more simple

interpretation is to be preferred, were conceded, the proposed rational system, in point of fact, is *not more simple* nor more comprehensible than the other; so that if it were allowable to substitute it, we should gain nothing in point of simplicity by so doing.

In respect to the primary doctrine of the Divine nature, we have already seen that the Unitarian hypothesis is in no degree more level to our apprehension than the plain doctrine of revelation. In extending the question to the other subordinate doctrines, I shall not deem it necessary to enter upon a formal examination of them, but shall briefly point out a few of the most striking difficulties in which to my apprehension the Unitarian, in consistency with his own principles, must be involved.

(23.) To reject one doctrine because it is inconceivable to the human faculties, whilst we at the same time admit another equally so, is surely a palpable inconsistency. Let us look at a few of the doctrines in which the Unitarian believes: he believes, as we have already seen, in a Deity of infinite perfections, possessing among others the attribute of infinite and unbounded benevolence. This, according to his own mode of arguing ought necessarily to exclude the possibility of any creature suffering for a moment any sort of pain or uneasiness whatsoever; yet the experience of every day teaches us otherwise, and we

have to reconcile the existence of evil with the perfect goodness of the Deity. If we view the dispensations of the Deity agreeably to the views developed in his word, we shall only be able to effect this reconciliation by yielding up the vain notions which unrestrained speculation, upon a fancied theory of the Divine perfections, in analogy with our confined ideas, would inculcate. It must be upon the same ground as that on which we receive other mysteries of the Divine will and dispensations; but the Unitarian can have no ground whatever on which to find such a solution of the difficulty. He must either admit a doctrine which he confesses above the solution of reason, and consequently not object to any other such doctrines, and consequently cease to be an Unitarian; or he must reject the belief in a Deity; or what would be equally reasonable, and would involve no profaneness, deny the existence of evil, pain, and suffering in this world.

(24.) The Unitarians admit the doctrine of the general providence of God; that is, we may suppose, they admit that the Deity having in the first instance constituted the physical and moral world, according to certain determinate laws, leaves the former to the invariable operation of these laws; whilst the latter is governed and continued by some sort of moral influence, which of whatever kind it be, must of necessity be beyond our ability to comprehend. But indepen-

dently of this difficulty, the counsels and designs of Divine Providence are most unquestionably of a nature inscrutable to us. It is sufficiently evident, from our entire blindness as to the results and tendency of those events which fall under our inspection, and which relate to things immediately about us, that "the judgments of God are," in truth, as St. Paul describes them, "unsearchable, and his ways past finding out *:" and indeed, from such conceptions as we can form of the nature of a supreme disposer of events, we must of necessity expect this to be the case. It would be almost contradictory, certainly derogatory, to our idea of the Divine perfections, to conclude otherwise. Here, then, is confessedly a mystery and an incomprehensible doctrine; yet in this, in open defiance of his own professions, the rationalist believes.

(25.) Again, does he believe in the free agency of man, or is he a fatalist? If he be not a believer in fatalism, he is a believer in one of the most inexplicable mysteries which it is possible to name. The reconciliation of the Divine prescience with the free will of man, it will hardly be necessary to observe, is a point which is confessedly far beyond our power to explain or conceive. If we regard it according to the view deducible from the letter of Scripture, we still

* Rom. xi, 33.

admit it to be an unsearchable mystery, and one at least as great as that of the Holy Trinity, or the Atonement. If we regard it distinct from Scripture, we are still further from obtaining anything like a satisfactory idea of it. This is, then, one alternative which the disciple of reason may make choice of; but the other is not in any degree better. Of the intrinsic reasonableness of the doctrine of fatalism, our opponents will probably not be able to say much. And how they who are such strenuous opposers of certain doctrines, because they fancy them at variance with the Divine attributes, can maintain a doctrine tending so extremely to depreciate our ideas of the Divine perfections as that of fatality, it is difficult to imagine; yet this way their opinions (as far as they are intelligible) seem to tend: and even here we are as much involved in mystery as ever.

(26.) If we carry the inquiry a little further, to the subject of our moral obligations, here the weight of difficulty hangs still as heavily on the Unitarian system. The supporters of that system make it their professed object to reduce the whole of the Gospel to a scheme of morality, and seek to excuse their presumption, in the alleged support they would thus afford to the purity of virtue. They pretend that they are thus endeavouring to enhance the excellence of morality, and to elevate it above the irrational standard by

which it is measured when debased by the humiliating doctrine of human unworthiness. They wish to display it to the admiration and cultivation of mankind in all its natural charms—they wish to make it worthy to be embraced by the man of the most elevated and philosophical views. And in the most pompous terms they describe its dignity and efficacy to such a degree, as in their opinion justifies them in setting up its claims to attention above those of Scripture. To promulgate the code of moral virtue they do not hesitate to abrogate that of revealed truth, and to exalt the merits of that excellence to which man may attain, they do not scruple to depreciate the merits of Christ.

What then, we may ask, is this elevated principle of morality which is so zealously upheld? Of what nature is this sublime doctrine of virtue, which is the idol of their adoration? Those who are only smitten by the external speciousness of Unitarianism, without being initiated into its more interior mysteries, will no doubt experience some surprize at finding that this sublime moral principle is in fact nothing else than a certain physical law of cause and effect, referring to the constitution of the human brain. Such is the ulterior principle to which their most enlightened teachers have reduced the matter. Such is the lofty origin of the rule of right and wrong—such the all-sufficient ground of merit. Man is to be

dignified and elevated into the character of a superior being, because he is under the influence of a certain combination of physical causes. He is to be raised up and rewarded with eternal happiness, because he has earned and deserved that happiness, not by a voluntary meritorious achievement of it, but by filling a place in the machinery of nature. In short, his conduct is under the dominion of fate, but the merit or demerit of that conduct is not, or in other words man is both under fate, and not under it at the same time. This mystery of morality is indeed worthy of the rest of the system.

(27.) One of the most singular among the numerous anomalies and singularities of this rational system of belief is, that its professors do not deny the facts of the miracles recorded in the Gospels. It would lead me into discussions of too great length here to pretend to examine in detail the character of that sort of supernatural agency which must be supposed in the simplest case of a miracle; but it is sufficient to observe, that if it should be conceded that in some cases recorded, we can form some sort of conception as to how the effect might be brought about, there are many others in which we decidedly cannot do so. Here, then, the rationalist admits truths which are confessedly in their nature incomprehensible. I am not sure whether from the very circumstance of these miracles being concerned

with physical things, there may not be even a greater degree of difficulty in the conception of them, than in those mysteries which refer to things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." In the latter case we have nothing previously to warp our judgment; in the former, from our habitual acquaintance with the powers of nature, there is perhaps a greater difficulty in conceiving their suspension: yet the Unitarian, who rejects mysteries, believes in miracles.

(28.) The more we wade into the writings of the Unitarian school, the more we find their system contradicting its professed principle: and while it seeks to get rid of all mysteries in religion, it is only by rejecting those hitherto received to involve itself in others, not only equally beyond our comprehension, but many of them totally devoid of proof. These mysteries may fairly be examined by the test of the avowed principles of the system: and by this test they will infallibly be found contradictory to themselves. Their moral theory, we have just seen, is of this description; but this is of a very homely cast, compared with some other parts of their doctrine. Let us look, for example, at their views of the future state, and (supposing that the nature of a future state were at all level to our apprehension) let us contemplate the doctrine they have so happily borrowed from the Church of Rome, of a purgatory, to

which the wicked are to be consigned for a limited time. The nature of these temporary sufferings is described to be *remedial*. Their object is to purify the wicked from their corruptions. This is the sum and substance of the idea : let us briefly examine it as to its philosophical character, and the extent of its meaning when reduced to precise terms.

A remedy for the disease of sin, and a purification from its corruption, can only signify the application of some means which shall operate in the way of cause and effect, to the removal of that disease and corruption. The subject operated upon is the human soul in its separate state. Of this, of course the Unitarian has a definite precise conception, though he does not instruct the world on this point. He comprehends exactly in what way this being is affected by the corruption of sinful habits : these he believes to consist in a certain state of the brain while the person is alive. He has an exact and perfect idea doubtless, of how these habits are transferred from the brain of the living being to the immaterial agent existing after death. The immaterial soul then has these habits destroyed by the infliction of pain. The particular way in which suffering operates to produce this effect, is no doubt clearly understood by our philosophers upon the principle of applying physical causes to metaphysical beings. The spirits are thus restored to that state which

would have been produced by those motions of the brain which constitute virtue during life.

It is unfortunate that no Unitarian physiologist has pointed out the peculiar "*modus operandi*," by which all this takes place, but unquestionably to make the thing consistent, this ought to be done. There is no doubt that it can be done, and that the whole is susceptible of mathematical proof; only these wary teachers have some good reason for keeping these recondite investigations to themselves: for to suppose for a moment that it can be otherwise, is to imagine what is directly contrary to the first and fundamental law of the whole system, namely, that the disciple is in no instance to believe any doctrine of which he has not a perfectly full and clear conception, and which is not substantiated by the most undeniable proof.

In fact, such terms as a "remedy" applied to the moral disease of sin, or a "purification" from its corruptions, when strictly examined mean nothing at all; they are mere figurative terms to express we know not what. Further, whatever ideas we may choose to attach to them, must, from the very nature of the subject, be altogether indefinite and incapable of containing any positive notion, or referring to any thing of which we can attain to a real comprehension. And besides all this, it is evident that the whole doctrine, were it ever so intelligible, is a mere gratuitous as-

sumption, unsubstantiated by even the shadow of, or pretence to, a proof.

I have not adverted to the evident inconsistency upon the Unitarian ground of any such sufferings, with the Divine goodness, which would be as strong an objection in this case as they make it in reference to the doctrine of "everlasting punishment;" nor have I as yet dwelt particularly on the nature of the idea entertained of the human soul in its separate state: but from what has been said, I should imagine it must be sufficiently clear, that the Unitarian completely fails in attaining that simplicity in his faith which it is his professed object to produce. If only one incomprehensible mystery can be fairly shewn to be an integrant part in the Unitarian scheme, its inconsistency and insufficiency are manifest: but there are other mysteries quite as great as those already adverted to, which we may consider very briefly, in order to see yet more perfectly the utter inadequacy of this rational scheme to answer its own design.

(29.) The class of doctrines I allude to are those concerning the nature of the human soul. Several eminent Unitarians have professed themselves Materialists; and to shew how well the doctrine of materialism accords with that of a future state, they have pretended to maintain also the absurd and trifling views in regard to that state which we have just examined. In so va-

riable and fluctuating a system it is extremely difficult to ascertain what is the professed tenet on any particular point. With respect to the existence of the human soul, it should seem that, according to the most recent exposition, a modified sort of materialism is the orthodox creed. At all events a future state is recognized, in which a consciousness of the actions done in this world will be retained: and whether this be effected by a re-organization of any material being, or by the continued existence of an immaterial principle, there will be no difference in the difficulty of forming an adequate conception of such a state. To "rational" views it is manifestly essential that we should have a positive definite idea of every object which those views embrace. In the present instance I contend that no such idea is, or can possibly be attained, of the immortal being or principle, or of the state in which that being exists. The difficulty is equally great on the material as upon the immaterial hypothesis. In the one case we have to form an idea of the way in which consciousness can be continued to matter; in the other to form an idea of an immaterial principle; each of which it is equally impossible to do. And if we could by any exertion of the most vivid imagination form any adequate conception, such as fully to satisfy our apprehension either of the one sort of existence or the other, still such idea would be the

mere creature of our imagination, and the truth of the representation would rest on no solid basis whatever. If it be said that the same difficulty occurs in other forms of religious belief, and is not peculiar to the Unitarian, I reply that the *difficulty* confessedly exists in all systems, but it constitutes no objection to any but the Unitarian. Under other forms of faith men are content to admit mysteries; and they admit this among the number. But with the Unitarian scheme it is at direct variance, to admit any thing which we are unable to comprehend.

(30.) But the existence of an immortal principle, and the preservation of consciousness, from the present to a future state, are by no means the sole, or even the greatest mysteries which the Unitarian adopts without the least hesitation. It is not the immortality of the soul alone which we are unable to comprehend, but its very existence in connexion with the body;—or even, if that should be thought to soften the difficulty, the thinking faculty communicated to an organized being: this, whichever way we may describe it, is another wonder and another mystery, of which I contend it is completely impossible for the understanding to obtain a satisfactory grasp. It is a subject upon which the man who wishes to take rational views may, if he pleases, exercise his acuteness with much less presumption, and probably with about as much chance of success

as on some other favorite topics of his speculation. He may here go on refining and theorizing without end, and I am persuaded will never arrive at all nearer to any precise definite comprehension of the thing than when he first set out. Yet such precise comprehension is an essential requisite to "rational" belief.

It may be said the last topic is more a metaphysical than a religious question. I grant it : but my object is to shew that the Unitarian, to keep up consistency with his professed principles, must either continue to observe them in forming opinions on topics like these, or if not, must make no inconsiderable concessions in reference to certain other doctrines before discussed. In fact, in order to maintain consistency, this same principle must be carried to its full extent, and applied to all other topics of investigation. It is not only the existence and nature of the thinking principle that we cannot comprehend ; the mode of its connexion with, or action upon, the bodily frame ; but the mere phenomenon of vitality is a subject on which we are equally involved in mystery. On the difficulties attending our ideas of the nature of consciousness, and other similar topics, I shall not here enter ; but it is sufficient to observe, that on these points, and in fact even on that of the existence of the material world around us, a similar disbelief ought in consistency to be maintained.

(31.) From the cursory view now taken, imperfect as it confessedly is, it is sufficiently evident how entirely incompetent the pretended rational system is to fulfil its own designs. It is manifest that even admitting the mode of proceeding by which the Unitarian arrives at his conclusions, they are not in themselves of such a nature as to give him the advantages he is seeking. He cannot form out of them a system in reality more simple or more level to the comprehension of the human mind, than that which is derived from the literal declarations of revelation. But the mode of proceeding by which this system is deduced, is one which cannot in fact be allowed on any principle of reason or criticism; one which is too glaringly repugnant to every rule of philosophical inquiry, to need more than a bare mention for its exposure. To view facts through the distorting medium of a preconceived theory, is alone sufficient to evince a most unphilosophical spirit in the inquirer; but to reject facts for no other reason than because they stand in the way of a favourite hypothesis, is an enormity which carries its own condemnation with it too obviously to need a single comment. (*See notes.*)

(32.) 2dly. But having thus far viewed the principles of the Unitarian scheme, and found their intrinsic emptiness, we may obtain yet more striking illustrations of the subject by a compa-

native sketch of this system, contrasted with those which professedly reject reason. If we take a cursory survey of the leading features of Christian doctrine, we shall find exactly the same resemblance between these several systems of error, which all alike profess such a rooted dislike of, and essential disagreement with, each other.

(33.) I. If the Unitarian denies the inherent corruption of original sin, is not the practical consequence of that doctrine equally done away with, and thus the doctrine itself rendered null and void by the Papist and the Fanatic? the one by his confessions and penances relieves the conscience from the sense of guilt: the other, when the process of conversion is once effected, elevates the regenerated believer into a state of fancied perfection and unsinning acceptance. In what way then, practically speaking, does the absolved Romanist or the regenerated Enthusiast feel in any degree the presence of an inherent principle of corruption and sin? And what does this amount to but a virtual rejection of the doctrine altogether, so far as the individual is concerned, and so far as the practical effects of spiritual humility are to be secured?

In denying original sin, and exalting human nature beyond its just dignity in moral virtue, the Unitarian closely resembles the professors of opposite systems. The similarity is exact; he

elevates man into a perfectly upright moral agent, by the operation of reason and virtue. The fanatic exalts the most abandoned sinner into a saint, leading on earth a life of unsinning perfection, through the fancied operation of grace. Nor among the professors of the Romish faith is a parallel wanting: for the same unsinning perfection they not only recognize in the lives of their saints, but it has been expressly pretended to by some of their more extravagant monastic fraternities. But when we look at this spiritual perfection, of which the two last named systems make so great a boast, what is it but a life of entire abstraction from all that is useful and practical; and a conceit tending to fill the mind with the most arrogant presumption? Nor does the Socinian principle of moral integrity yield to either of the others in its presumptuous consequences, or in its equally great unfitness for general practical application among the mass of mankind. (*See notes.*)

(34.) II. If we look to the doctrine of future condemnation as perverted by the Socinians, in what does their purification of the corrupt soul differ from that effected by the Romish purgatory? And where is the practical difference if one system denies a state of eternal punishment, and the other by its pardons and indulgences can remove at pleasure all salutary apprehensions of it?

It is further worthy of remark, that upon this topic the popish writers adopt precisely the same principle of arguing as the Socinians do, from the supposed idea that eternal punishment would be inconsistent with the Divine perfections. It is true in the one case these arguments are brought to support the doctrine of purgatory, and apply only to venial sins, for the purgation of which purgatory is specially designed ; whereas the other applies to all sorts of sin : but then, it must be recollected how much it is to the interests of the Romish priesthood to have as many sorts of sin as possible, pardonable by the sale of indulgences. The casuists, therefore, have contrived to swell the catalogue, so as to leave very few sins, and those only of the most atrocious character and unusual occurrence, in the number of mortal sins. Thus, to almost all the offences to which men are commonly prone, does the reasoning apply, that to recompense them with eternal death would be inconsistent with the Divine goodness : so that though in appearance more limited in its conditions, than the Socinian view of the subject, yet both in principle and in practical efficacy they are precisely alike. (*See notes.*)

But, can any parallel, it may be asked, be made out between these systems, and that of the fanatic, who so strenuously insists on the belief in future torments ? Perhaps a little consideration may shew us that these systems, appa-

rently so opposite, are yet more similar in their consequences, than we might at first suspect. It is to no purpose that the enthusiast so loudly declaims on the terrors of divine wrath, if his representations are such as to divest them of their practical influence. And that they are so is easily shewn; for while he thunders out the sentence of reprobation against all who are not partakers in his fancied spiritual gifts, the effects of that sentence are made of no avail in restraining immorality and crime. He considers all who are not within the pale of his sect as equally under condemnation: the most virtuous character, if he has not experienced the necessary raptures, is exactly upon the same level as the most abandoned criminal: and if both are alike consigned to damnation, that doctrine, so far as any practical consequences can flow from it, is rendered utterly useless.

Thus, whether on the one hand the doctrine of future retribution be underrated and refined away; or on the other, overstrained and carried to an unscriptural extent, it is in either case rendered nugatory; and by each system is the sense of moral obligation equally weakened.

(35.) 3. If we turn to the doctrines respecting the salvation of man, we shall find an equally close resemblance between these so opposite systems: in the unreasonable tenets of each we shall find something worse than a mere departure from

the standard of a truly rational faith; we shall find an equal tendency to destroy the practical efficacy of that faith.

The doctrine of the atonement objected to as contrary to reason by one party, is by others, upon quite opposite principles, so degraded and altered as to retain nothing of its real efficacy. The fanatic might feel surprized and offended at being classed on this score, with the Unitarian. But while, instead of taking upon its scriptural basis the doctrine of universal redemption, he limits the offer of mercy, and confines the unbounded love of God, by restricting salvation to the chosen few of his own sect, is not this a degradation of the great scheme of redeeming love, is not this a depreciation of the all sufficient merits of the Redeemer? The work of redemption, and the efficacy of the atonement, are thus made to depend on certain vague and delusive feelings in individuals. The doctrine is limited and explained in accordance with those feelings. And wherein does the process of interpreting the truth, agreeably to this imaginary standard differ, from explaining it away on the not less imaginary principle designated as reason? And whilst the one system refines away the doctrine itself, and the other, all its practical force, we find it rendered no less inefficient by the appendages with which it is disguised by a third party. The Church of Rome, by admitting a multiplicity of

mediators, detracts from the sufficiency of the one : and in offering up the sacrifice of the mass derogates from, while she pretends to exalt, the merits of the greater sacrifice on the cross.

(36.) In no respect have the extravagancies of enthusiasm been more strikingly displayed than in those instances (familiar to all who have made the history of fanaticism their study) where fanatics have been so transported beyond all bounds of reason and moderation, as to fancy themselves not only regenerate in unsinning holiness themselves, but the peculiar favourites of heaven, sent by special commission to regenerate the world. Without any appearance of those tests, which reason requires, in the possession of miraculous powers, they have imagined themselves sent forth, and called by express Divine revelation, to shew that what is established as the religion of Christ, and clearly proved conformable in all things to his holy Gospel, is in fact not the Gospel, nor an establishment tending any more to uphold and disseminate the preaching of Christ, than any of the heathen establishments among those nations to whom the Apostles preached. To assume to themselves the office of Apostles, and therein the necessity of a new revelation communicated by them, is surely to depreciate the revelation already given. To suppose themselves commissioned to declare the truth by express inspiration, is surely nothing less than to maintain that the

former revelation by Christ and his Apostles was insufficient. For if their object were merely to reform the profession of that Gospel; fresh inspiration would be altogether superfluous. Thus, like the Unitarian philosophers, their object is to enlighten a world involved in darkness, ignorance, and prejudice. And like them in doing so they virtually underrate, and consider inefficient, the plain truths ordinarily derived from the words of revelation. The illumination then of either party, whether by philosophy or grace, by self-conceit or self-delusion, is as it were supplementary to Scripture, and derogatory to the fulness and sufficiency of the declaration of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ and his holy Apostles. And in these characteristics, as well as many others which might be pointed out, both parties agree in the closest similarity to the Church of Rome and her infallible traditions.

(37.) Nor are they at all more liberal in restricting salvation exclusively to those within the pale of their own communion. This must clearly be the case with the Unitarian; who must, as the necessary consequence of his tenets, condemn all denominations of Christians besides his own, as being most blasphemous idolaters. And with the fanatic it is too obviously the case to need remark. In fact, in all these irrational systems, we cannot but observe the same arrogance and presumption, the same uncharitableness and illi-

berality, the same delusive and mischievous spirit, not less busily at work in former than in latter times : equally congenial to the superstitions of the convent, the ravings of the conventicle, and the abstractions of the lecture room.

(38.) Again : if the Unitarian denies altogether the divine character of our Lord, the other systems tend no less to derogate from the dignity they profess to ascribe to Him.

Unitarian teachers have not scrupled to set themselves up as superior to Christ, and to avow that they knew more of Divine truth than his Apostles. In precisely the same spirit one of the great leaders of modern enthusiasm did not hesitate to invest himself with the office of Christ. His own words imply that Whitfield considered himself the Redeemer, at least of himself if not of his flock ; in arrogating to himself the very office of the Redeemer, in the very phrase of Scripture. Nor is this blasphemous presumption wanting in an exact counterpart among the superstitions of Rome. It might seem superfluous to say any thing of the host of inferior mediators the Romish Church universally admits, or of her well known exaltation of the Blessed Virgin, to a dignity decidedly superior to that of the Saviour. But at the present day, the idea that they do really regard the Virgin and Saints as mediators is so studiously discountenanced, and every attempt made to smooth over the difficulty, and persuade the

world that they worship no other mediator than one, that it is necessary to keep in view the very pointed form in which, on most of their saints' days, they expressly offer up their petitions in the Collects for those solemnities, "through the merits and intercession" of the saints.

But not to dwell upon this topic, we have only to look to that most revolting instance of superstitious impiety, the actual recognition of a second Redeemer by the Franciscans, in the person of their sainted founder. This well known fact, which can be in no way dissembled or denied, proves the congeniality between the spirit of superstition, that of rational illumination, and that of fanatical infatuation, more clearly than volumes of argument. In whatever respect they may be the most deadly enemies, yet in perverting the simplicity of the Gospel scheme of salvation, and setting up *themselves* to the derogation of the Divine dignity of our Lord, the fanatic, the Socinian, and the Romanist go hand in hand—and there is concord between Whitfield, Priestly, and St. Francis. (*See notes.*)

(39.) 4. A recurrence to the same principle will render it superfluous to say much on the subjects of the justification and sanctification of the individual. The Unitarian doctrine of moral merit is obviously in effect the same as that of the system which recognizes works of supererogation.

Both alike exhibit one of the most entire and gross perversions of the Gospel which it is possible to conceive. These corruptions strike at the very root of Christian obligations. The denial of our own merit being obviously the very first requisite to a participation in the merits of the Redeemer, and the sense of the unworthiness of our own services, the very motive to that faith by which those services may be accepted through the worthiness of Christ.

But then is not this the very principle upon which the other class of religionists so exclusively dwell? Unquestionably the fanatic professes the doctrine of justification by faith, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, as the grand principle of his system; but he carries the Scripture doctrine to an unwarrantable excess; and in his refinements upon it, it seems more than questionable whether there is not a great tendency to strengthen the very opposite principle; and whether, while the justification of the believer is apparently founded in Divine Grace, it is not grounded in reality upon something very like personal worthiness.

While the belief in our justification is grounded on no presumptuous assurance, but on an humble trust in the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, not perceptible but by its fruits—this is perfectly consistent with that sense of our own demerits, and that reliance on the merits of a Sa-

viour by virtue of a faith which is the evidence of things “*not seen* *,” which the Gospel expressly inculcates.

But if a *sensible impulse* is required to be felt, if the experience of certain rapturous fervours be the true test of a man’s being in a state of salvation—this is surely to justify him by a participation not in the *hope* but in the *sense* of acceptance; this is surely to place reliance on what is *felt by the individual*, rather than on Him who ought to be alone relied on. This is surely to make the *individual* worthy by virtue of what is *wrought in him*, rather than to ascribe the sole worthiness to Him who died for the unworthy.

Thus the man who professes to be led solely by faith, virtually rejects it just as much as he who substitutes for it what he calls reason; and the sensible impulse of the Holy Spirit becomes to him as infallible a guide, as the decrees of Rome to her votary, or the illumination of rationalism to its disciple. Led by these delusions of sense, “he walks” not “by faith,” but “by sight †.” And how totally does such a religion defeat the practical ends to which a true faith should be directed? How entirely and essentially is it opposed to that spirit of Christian humility which is proposed in the Gospel as the

* Heb. xi. 1.

† 1 Cor. v. 7.

foundation of all Christian virtues and perfections?

Nor is the Roman perversion of the doctrine of justification less favourable to human corruption, or less presumptuous in its character. The "merit of congruity," in reference to works before justification, can scarcely be less flattering to human pride, or more hostile to the cultivation of a spirit of entire humility, than the presumptuous doctrines of enthusiasm and Socinianism. And the yet stronger declaration of the Council of Trent, that the good works of a justified person, actually for their own sake deserve and merit the favour of God; as well as the merit of condignity, as it was termed, which some of their most eminent divines ascribe to the virtues of equity and charity, are not less at variance with Scripture, than in close accordance with the moral merit of one class of their opponents and the justification by the individual sensations of the other. (*See notes.*)

(40.) 5. The truly rational believer in Scripture receives the literal doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledges the efficacy of those appointed means, the holy sacraments, for obtaining the help of divine grace, when duly partaken of in a spirit of humility and faith, upon the authority of the express words of our Lord.

The Romanist and the fanatic, while they pro-

fess to believe in the influence of the Spirit, both virtually derogate from its true character. The one offers a service which is any thing rather than "worshipping in spirit and in truth *," or a religion "not in the letter but in the spirit †." The other renders the Divine help of no avail whatever to the purposes of practical duty: thus *in effect* each too nearly resembles the Socinian in his denial of the doctrine altogether. Nor is the difference much greater in respect to the sacramental means of grace. For while the Socinian totally rejects them, the enthusiast makes them a mere dead letter:—and the Romanist, by the principle of an "*opus operatum*," and the intention of the Priest, as completely perverts their real design and nature, and scarcely less than the others destroys their practical effect. (*See notes.*)

(41.) It is hardly necessary to remark the direct and powerful tendency of enthusiasm to generate and nourish spiritual pride. Nor is the Romish system less open to the same accusation. While its votaries seem to be humbled under the most absolute spiritual despotism, and degraded by the bondage of the most irrational observances, there is yet ample room for the greatest spiritual arrogance under this external humiliation; and a spirit of pharisaical pride and censo-

* John iv. 24.

† Rom. ii. 29.

riousness is the too frequent effect of a punctilious fulfilment of external rites.

And the *spiritual* pride, equally cherished under these opposite systems, when closely examined, and traced to its fountain head, differs but little in its principle and nothing in its effects, from the *intellectual* pride which puffs up and misleads the pretended disciple of reason.

(42.) The comparison now attempted to be drawn between these several systems of religious belief, apparently so essentially opposed to each other, is confessedly to be regarded only as a cursory sketch. If its details were filled up, and doubtless an abundant supply of materials might be found for doing so, it would exhibit analogies the more striking, as we consider the entirely opposite character of the professed principles upon which the several systems are grounded. When we contemplate the similarity thus subsisting in so remarkable a degree, between one system professing to be built solely on reason, and others professedly rejecting reason, we cannot help feeling in the most sensible manner that all three are equally deviations from correct reason and true religion. And more especially must this be the case, when we estimate the different systems by the test of their moral tendency and practical efficacy. This is a sort of internal evidence which will assuredly be stamped in the

most perfect and unequivocal characters on any religion originating from God. It may also be taken as a very fair criterion of the value and truth of any more particular view or interpretation of religious doctrine. That view which best tends to produce and encourage practical and useful virtues, and to form the thoughts and affections upon the most perfect and beneficial model, is likely to be that which has most claim to be a correct view of the meaning of revelation ; and especially must such characteristics be entitled to regard, when the *reasonableness* of any system is in question : for if there be any one particular respecting religious doctrine which can with more propriety than another come within the province of reason, it is surely the practical tendency of that doctrine. Here, as the question relates to topics with which our own actions and our own good are most nearly concerned, our reason may, if any where, find its legitimate use.

(43.) And if we were to determine *à priori*, what sort of moral principle and rule of duty were practically the most reasonable and efficacious, we might safely consider ourselves not far wrong in fixing upon the particular system of belief best calculated to lead to such results. A constant practical tendency to moral purity, and the fulfilment of all social relations, would be primary requisites. The religious principle, while it was such as to elevate a man above worldly

affections, should not be of such a cast as to make him a recluse. The devotional spirit to be cultivated should be such as neither to carry away the soul in presumptuous flights, nor to cast it down in servile despondency. A due reverence of spirit on the one hand, and a rational tranquillity of mind on the other, are the qualities best suited for the foundation of practical virtues.

If we look for the best and most practical kind of religion, inculcated to the fullest extent in the most perfect manner, by the most powerful motives, and under the most awful sanctions, we shall most assuredly find it in the simple, literal religion of Scripture, as distinguished equally from all the various extremes of error above examined.

Notwithstanding the appearance of a sort of severity of principle in all those systems, somewhat different from the mildness and moderation of true Christianity, they yet have each in reality a strong tendency to flatter the corrupt affections of human nature. It is true they all propose some things apparently harsh to their votaries;—in one there are associations of natural feeling to be broken, and a stoical coldness to be acquired: in another there are multifarious, burdensome, and often humiliating rites to be gone through: in another a prostration of soul, and a sacrifice of all that is pleasing to the pride of human nature are required. But all these ordinances and re-

quisitions; however apparently distasteful, are in reality cheap and easy substitutes for that pure, rational, and practical service, which scriptural Christianity demands.

All these services of human invention are, to say the least, very compatible with an impure heart—with that sort of religion whose votaries can draw nigh to the Lord with their lips, while their hearts are far from him—with that spirit which hath the form of godliness, but denieth the power thereof*.

It would certainly be harsh and unjust to censure the principles of any faith, because practical depravity may be found among its professors. Nor would it be less so, to condemn the body of its professors as tainted with immoralities, because the errors of the system may have such a practical tendency. Yet we may fairly animadvert on such a tendency, and observe what facilities any peculiar tenets may give to affording a cloak for licentiousness.

That system requires but few comments in which no mystery is attacked with so much zeal as the simple doctrine of future retribution: and while the disciple of reason finds no difficulty in the mysterious idea of a future life, and goes far beyond the limits of reason, in the fond hope of securing for himself the enjoyment of immorta-

lity, he is startled with every species of difficulty and objection, when the other side of the representation, however equally balanced, is set before him ; and reason discovers a thousand incongruities and impossibilities. What sort of reason this is cannot be a matter of much doubt. Many inconsistencies may well be overlooked for the sake of so convenient a tenet.

But it is not under the garb of rational religion alone that practical irreligion has an opportunity of hiding itself, other forms of corruption are not less favourable to its designs.

To say any thing of the peculiar facilities which the institutions of the Romish Church afford for the concealment of licentiousness and infidelity, under the mask of formal observances, would be superfluous ; nor will it be necessary to use many arguments to point out the easy remedy which enthusiasm applies to the sinful conscience. Even after the most protracted course of vice, the process of conversion is readily applied, and the regenerated offender is as free from the consequences of his past sins, as any indulgence dispensed from Rome, after the infliction of a little wholesome penance, could possibly make him ; and as secure from the dread of future punishment as he could be by adopting the Unitarian decisions against it.

To reject the use of reason, and to throw himself upon the bosom of the Church, or to give

himself up to the extravagance of an Antinomian faith, saves the practical unbeliever the trouble of wading into the depths of metaphysics, to find arguments for excusing his immoralities. Thus also he gains advantages in the eyes of the world in not obtruding any thing calculated to shock the common feelings of mankind; and, at the same time, in professedly placing himself without the pale of reason, he is not exposed to the reproach of owning himself convinced of the truth of that system which he embraces.

But a truly rational religion will not allow or sanction in the slightest degree, any such alienation of profession from conviction, or of practice from profession: it maintains the belief in doctrines as the foundation of practical motives, and admits as a true belief only that which is built on rational conviction. (*See notes.*)

CONCLUSION.

RECAPITULATION—GENERAL REMARKS ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL
PRETENSIONS OF UNITARIANISM, ESPECIALLY AS COMPARED
WITH THE OTHER SYSTEMS.

In conclusion, I would briefly recapitulate the substance of the foregoing argument. The just limits of human reason, in matters of religion, the boundaries within which its exercise ought to be confined, have been questions discussed with great ability by many writers. The reasonableness of a belief in mysteries, the distinction between what is *above* reason, and what is *contrary* to it, are points which have been treated with equal skill and effect by authors of the highest celebrity. But the line of argument and the theme of declamation usually adopted, has been to take human reason or philosophy as one system, and religious belief as another, and to consider the former as a principle perhaps incorrect in itself, but certainly most fallacious and unwarrantable when set up by its advocates to the depression of faith; and as such to condemn and reject it, at least in reference to all inquiries respecting the doctrines of religion.

The supposition that reason is something essentially hostile to faith was adopted not only by the friends of religion in its defence, but by the Deists of the 17th century, in shewing the necessity of rejecting revelation altogether, because it was thus contrary to reason. Hence a third class of writers arose, who introduced the idea of completely reconciling the two; who attempted to shew not only that there was no hostility between the two principles, but that true religion was vitally connected with true philosophy, or even that philosophy was but a part of religion. Hence a number of singular speculations, in which not only religion in general, but the details of all its peculiar doctrines, were explained and upheld upon the principles of philosophical and even mathematical demonstration. (*See notes.*)

This was running from one extreme into another; and in fact but little argument would be necessary to shew the fallacy of such a mode of proceeding. After all, the grand question *what is this reason, this philosophy*, with which religion agrees or disagrees? was comparatively unattended to. And the middle course, that of calmly inquiring *what* principles of reason or philosophy we have which can properly be brought to bear on the subject, or can in any way come into comparison with the truths of religion, whether to support or discredit them, seems to have been overlooked.

But while endeavours were thus made in one way to unite religion and philosophy, a similar union was attempted in other quarters upon the dangerous principle which it has been my object to examine in the foregoing inquiries ;—which, with the view of assimilating religious truth to certain assumed principles, designated as those of reason, sets about to destroy all those peculiarities of religion, in which it appeared to disagree with such principles ;—an easy and satisfactory mode of making any two things agree.

My object then has been to pursue the middle course just adverted to—to examine that important part of the question which, as I have remarked, has remained comparatively untouched. To ask, when the professed rationalist asserts that his doctrine is agreeable to reason, and ours at variance with reason, what is the *ground* upon which he can substantiate this ? How is it shewn that such agreement or disagreement exists ? or *what is it* with which the doctrine agrees or disagrees ? The writings of the rational school are full of such expressions as, “ this doctrine *must be*” interpreted in such or such a way—the meaning of such an expression “ *can be but*” allegorical. The question I ask is, *why* must it, *why* can it but be, thus interpreted ?

It is precisely to the examination of these questions that the foregoing remarks have been directed. The Unitarian urges reason as the

principle on which the doctrine is judged of. My object has been to discover *what* this principle is ; and in the inquiry it has, I trust, been satisfactorily shewn that in *no* part of the system of Divine doctrine, we have *any ground* for framing conclusions as to what *must be*, but are driven to content ourselves with inquiring what *is*. It is not *whether* the powers of human reason are adequately or *fitly employed* in judging of the truths of religion, that I have made matter of question, but rather *what materials* reason has to work upon in reference to such subjects, supposing its authority and sufficiency were admitted. Or to borrow a different illustration, my object has been to shew that reason, when exerted on these subjects, is not as a lever of insufficient strength, but as a lever without a fulcrum. And I have, I conceive, fairly come to the conclusion, that any such principle as the rationalist sets out with, can only be a *gratuitous assumption*, a mere hypothesis, the offspring of his own *imagination*; and as such entirely miscalled when designated by the title of *reason*.

On subjects where we have but one source of information, where we come to that source to be instructed, unfurnished with any previous ideas with which to compare such as we thence may derive—unprovided with any standard by which to measure the truths thus delivered, it is preposterous to object to receiving the doctrine pre-

cisely in the form in which it is conveyed to us. This surely would be virtually to disown the want of that instruction we profess to be seeking; to imply that we are in possession of some other and better instruction on the same points.

In following the literal sense of Scripture, we have the direct evidence in our support: at least we cannot be charged with wilfully going wrong. In attempts to theorize, we cannot be secure from error, and lay ourselves open to we know not how great dangers. We follow a presumptuous course to attain no other advantages, even if we could thus attain them, than those which might be with certainty and security attained by the safe and humble path of scriptural belief.

It has, I trust, been made to appear, that we have in reality no ground whatever to make it *more reasonable* that we should run into forced and impossible interpretations, or most capricious and unwarrantable rejection of Scripture, than that we should receive its declarations in their plain and obvious import. Nor, when we observe the spirit which leads to such opinions, claiming kindred with the spirit of philosophy, and the enquirer representing himself as taking enlarged views, cleared from the mists of ignorance and prejudice, can we be long in discovering the emptiness of such pretensions. That the human mind, enlightened by science in physical things, must be guided by analogy and congruity, and

depend upon its own resources in the search after religious truth, and that the doctrines of revelation must be viewed in such a way as shall reduce them to their simplest principles, and make them conformable to the dictates of reason, and consistent with general analogy and congruity;—are doubtless very plausible and imposing representations, and such as may, to those who are utterly ignorant of real science, appear stamped with the impress of eminent wisdom and immutable truth: but what can be more futile than such notions, when divested of their specious embellishments? Nothing can be in itself more unphilosophical, or a stronger proof of a mind which has derived none of the real benefits of philosophic studies, than the expectation that we shall be able to attain a full explanation of every part of a given subject:—to suppose that it must be really resolvable into certain elementary ideas of a very simple description, or to assume that it must be ultimately reducible to a congruity with some preconceived system. The enquirer who should set about any investigation in science on such principles, would soon find himself, and sooner display to others that he understood nothing of the fundamental rule of induction by which the triumphs of modern science have been achieved. In the physical sciences we are unquestionably to a considerable extent guided by analogy. There are limits beyond which it would be rea-

sonable to distrust any apparent new result on the ground of incongruity : but if all chance of error should be excluded, we must then make congruity give way to fact; or rather, must remodel our ideas of congruity in accordance with fact. Analogy, though a very useful guide in indicating the path of research, is not the absolute rule of truth. We may admit that there must be some universal principles of harmony pervading the whole of nature ;—the difficulty lies in fixing the standard of such congruity, and pointing out what those principles are. If, then, even in this case, we are not to make matter of fact bend to preconceived ideas of uniformity, much less are we warranted on doing so in subjects beyond the reach of physical laws ; in things confessedly, and in their very nature beyond all analogy.

There is a certain point in the progress of information, at which men possess just enough education to make them think a little for themselves, while they have just too little to make them think enough. And there are little minds to whose perceptions every object appears proportionally contracted : and those who view things through such a medium, fancy themselves able to grasp the most immense subjects : and it is precisely to such capacities that rationalism in religion is peculiarly adapted, and most powerfully recommends itself. The profession of Unitarian tenets, by persons of this sort of intellec-

tual character, is of course closely associated with their fancied philosophical attainments ; but when such speculations are fairly tried by the test of the acknowledged principle of true philosophy, the rule of cautious inductive research, we have found their pretensions wholly groundless.

In philosophical enquiries it is often a matter of greater difficulty for an ill instructed mind to admit a number of simple facts, than to apprehend an abstruse theory. In the latter there is generally something to captivate the imagination ; whilst the former have a harsh, and perhaps incongruous appearance ; they are multifarious and unconnected, and the apprehension does not readily collect and combine them. A theory is uniform and inviting, and pleases by seeming to reduce all the facts to their common first principle. It flatters by appearing to give us access to the cause, and satisfies the imagination by bringing together the disjointed parts into a compact and symmetrical whole. Scattered truths elude the grasp of the apprehension ; theory offers something tangible. It is here then that one characteristic distinction is afforded between the mind thoroughly instructed in real philosophical principles, and that merely possessed of a superficial acquaintance with them. The former will remain satisfied with facts, and will carefully observe the limits of certain inference from them. The latter regards no part of

science worth examining, except with a view to theorize upon it.

And just so it is in religion. The plainness of its various duties, and the vastness of its incomprehensible truths, are alike harsh to an ill-instructed mind. It wants something more tangible to fix its hold upon. It wishes to reduce them all to some general and simple principle.

A sound and cautious enquirer, however, finds the necessity and the propriety of confining himself to that view, which is like keeping to the simple facts, in however unconnected a form they may appear: he receives all the doctrines of Scripture as they are presented to him: he acknowledges all the duties of that spiritual service which is required of him: he does not seek to reduce the one to the principles of any fallacious and ungrounded theory, nor does he wish to embody the other in any more definite system of observances: he admits the nature and objects of religion to be spiritual; he therefore does not wish to make them sensible. He considers the truths of revelation to be addressed to the practical feelings, through the medium of the reasoning faculties: he therefore does not require them to be impressed by the power of the senses, or of the imagination: though, at the same time, he is far from undervaluing these as subordinate means of assisting to keep alive the influence of religion on the soul.

On the other hand, all the erroneous systems of religion agree in the neglect of these rational principles, and display precisely similar faults to those just described, as characterizing false and superficial philosophy. The disciples of these systems, however widely different in their grounds of belief, yet all agree in wishing to reduce religion to *some one tangible principle*. The Romanist confines his attention to the punctual fulfilment of certain prescribed rites, and his conscience is satisfied. On the image of his saint his eyes are fixed, and his devotion concentrated: He sees the body of Christ elevated on the altar, falls down and adores it: If he sins he comes to confession, and goes through the prescribed penance: in these acts his religion consists. The fanatic regards nothing but the sensation of "an horrible dread," which at some definite period overwhelms his soul with conviction: an immediate experience of the Divine grace succeeds; and this is the test, the sum and substance of religion. If, after that, he has any thing else to do, it is to sit under a particular preacher, and to uphold his sect. Thus is religion again reduced to one or two definite points: it is thus rendered tangible to the perception. And, however dissimilar the Unitarian system may at first sight appear, it does in fact display exactly similar characters. The object here is to get rid of every thing which is incomprehensible and mysterious; and to re-

duce the whole of religion to one or two ideas, conceived (though very fallaciously so,) to be of the simplest kind : to establish a theory which the mind may be able (or thinks it is able) to grasp : to bring all essential truths within the compass of one uniform system.

In this point of view then it will be evident that the Unitarian doctrine must, however reluctantly, give up all claim to any peculiar philosophic distinction. It agrees with the wildest extravagance and the blindest superstition, however professedly opposed to them, in exhibiting a glaring violation of the very first principles of philosophizing. Whilst, on the other hand, if there be any thing of a true philosophic character, in that humble and cautious mode of investigating truth, which consists in carefully proceeding step by step, and never hesitating to avow every truth, however harsh it may appear, when sufficient evidence calls for our assent to it : then we must concede the title of rational belief, in the truest and fullest sense, to the simple and literal reception of all the contents of the volume of inspiration : " The form of sound words," " the faith once delivered to the saints," as upheld in all its primitive purity, by the Apostolic Church of England.

The opposing systems, whether professing the guidance or the rejection of reason, all agree in presumptuous pretensions to arriving at Divine

knowledge by a short and original path. They all set up some superior principle, by which the truth is at once to be infallibly ascertained and fixed. One despising the beaten track, disregarding all established boundaries, and setting at defiance alike antiquity, common sense, grammar, and logic, makes a way of its own for its followers, to *rational* truth. Another clears away all difficulties, and decides all doubts, by a peremptory and infallible decree, and takes from its disciples the trouble of forming an opinion of their own. The third by an equally irresistible and infallible influence, illuminates the mind of its votary, and admits him to a peculiar and privileged view of Divine things.

If the one party deny and explain away all mysteries, the others do much to diminish the reverence due to them. If, by the one, speculation is presumptuously carried into the hidden things above, by another those mysteries are brought down to the test of sensible perception in the individual, and rendered unbecomingly familiar; and the third discredits the mysteries of revelation by embodying them in tangible idolatries, and adding wonders of its own invention.

But a simple scriptural faith is content to be guided by the plain and sound rules of grammatical interpretation, and the deliberate dictates of common sense, judging upon accumulated evi-

dence. It is built upon reason, in the truest sense of the word, and acknowledges mysteries on the simple ground, that there are innumerable truths presented on all hands, which the human mind is unable to reconcile together.

I cannot close these remarks better than by pressing upon the attention of the *rational* inquirer after religious truth, the advice contained in the following passages of an ancient writer, not less excellent and rational in spirit and tendency, than venerable and sublime in manner and style:—

“Thy heart hath gone too far in this world, and thinkest thou to comprehend the way of the most High?”

“Thine own things, and such as are grown up with thee, canst thou not know; how should thy vessel then be able to comprehend the way of the Highest? For like as the ground is given unto the wood, and the sea to his floods: even so they that dwell upon the earth may understand nothing, but that which is upon the earth:”

“The more thou searchest the more thou shalt marvel, for the world hasteth fast to pass away, and cannot comprehend the things that are promised to the righteous in time to come: for this world is full of unrighteousness and infirmities*.”

Again, what can be more admirable and em-

* 2 Esdras iv. 2. 10, 11. 21. 26, 27.

phatic than the observation of another writer of the same school, “ Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us ; but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out * ? ”

And in conclusion, if we turn to the words of revelation, the view which the original teachers of Christianity give of its principles, is precisely such as must recommend itself as well to the truly rational enquirer, as to the faithful believer, and to the dutiful son of the Universal Church.

For, as to the foundation of belief, what can be more truly reasonable, more soundly philosophical, than the admonitions of the inspired Apostle, warning us against those who would “ despoil us ” of the simplicity of our Gospel faith, by that false “ philosophy ” which is in fact only “ vain deceit † . ” What more acute than his distinction of the entirely different evidence on which the Gospel doctrines are founded, from that of the theories of human philosophy ; and his censure of either excess of spiritual or intellectual pride,—the wisdom sought by the Greeks, or the sensible manifestation required by the Jew, the superstitious, or enthusiastic ‡ . What can be more discriminating than the same Apostle’s charge to Timothy, to keep that peculiar form of doctrine, which was delivered to him, upon *distinct*

* Wisd. ix. 16.

† Col. ii. 8.

‡ See 1 Cor. i. 23, &c. ; ii. 1, &c.

authority, pure and uncorrupt *;—perplexing its simplicity with none of those “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called,” which did but gender strife †.—What more obviously just than the censure on the deceiver, who, in an arrogant spirit, sought to “beguile” the converts “by voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen: vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind, and not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God ‡.”

If we look at the particular doctrines, how philosophically correct, and how widely different from the language of enthusiasm, the admission, that now our knowledge of divine mysteries is but “in part,” and that “we see but as through a glass darkly §.” What more perfectly consistent with the surest convictions of reason, and the strongest dictates of natural feeling, than the sublime language of the same Apostle, representing the Supreme Being as he “who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see:” yet in devout adoration ascribing to him “honour and power everlasting ||.” Thus acknowledging the utter inadequacy of our ideas

* 2 Tim. iii. 14, &c. † 1 Tim. vi. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 23.

‡ Col. ii. 18. § 1 Cor. xiii. 12. || 1 Tim. vi. 16.

as to abstract knowledge; yet making such knowledge amply sufficient as the ground and motive of worship and practical service.

Yet, further, when we regard the Divine dispensations on our behalf, as set forth in the plain and obvious sense of Scripture, who is not constrained to join in the exclamation of the Apostle, “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out * !” Who will not admit, with the same Apostle, that “without controversy, *great is the mystery* of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh ; justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory †.”

Yet through the cloud of this mystery we discern the light of life : “through Jesus Christ we have access by one spirit unto the Father ‡ :” and having this unspeakable privilege we have the strong ground and motive on which truly Christian practice is urged ;—that “reasonable service” which is “in spirit and in truth § :” we have that knowledge which alone can make us “wise unto salvation || ;” that word of divine truth, which, “received with meekness,” and “engrafted” into our hearts, “is able to save our souls ¶.”

* Rom. xi. 33.

† 1 Tim. iii. 16.

‡ Eph. ii. 18.

§ Rom. xii. 1. John iv. 23.

|| 2 Tim. iii. 15.

¶ James i. 21.

NOTES.

NOTES TO SECTION I.

to § 16.

IN maintaining the reasonableness of that ground of faith which is derived from a literal reception of the Holy Scriptures, I have shewn it to be, in point of rationality, clearly and equally distinguished from the vain speculations of a philosophy, falsely so called, which tend to diminish from Scripture on the one hand, and the deceits of enthusiasm and superstition which unwarrantably add to it, on the other.

I have adverted to one instance of the professed requisition of the Church of Rome upon her children, to discard the use of reason in the reception of her authoritative decrees. The mere imposition of the belief in transubstantiation is a sufficient proof of this: but this is in fact but a small part of the extravagance of the demand. Not only is the votary required to believe *contrary to the evidence of his senses*, but he is called upon to confess his faith in *articles* which involve a *direct contradiction to each other*. This will sufficiently appear, by comparing the two following quotations from the great formulary of Romish belief:

“Canones et Decreta sacro-sancti oecumenici et generalis concilii Tridentii,” &c. In the 21st session under

Pius IV. the following declaration occurs: "....Insuper declarat, quamvis Redemptor Noster, ut antea dictum est, in supremâ illâ cœnâ hoc sacramentum in duabus speciebus instituerit, et Apostolis tradiderit, tamen fatendum esse, etiam *sub alterâ tantum specie totum atque integrum Christum*, verumq. sacramentum sumi." (P. cxxxi. Ed. 1564.)

But in a former decree of the same Council, we find the change of the elements in transubstantiation to be "*totius substantiæ panis in substantium Corporis Christi Domini nostri, et totius substantiæ vini in substantiam sanguinis ejus.*" (P. lxxiv.) This was in the 13th session under Julius III.

The same contradiction is maintained almost in the same words in the *Professio fidei Catholice, &c.* or creed of Pius IV. Articles 5 and 6. See *Sylloge Confessionum*, Oxf. 1804. It is pointed out, and more fully enlarged upon, by Bishop Marsh, in his "*Comparative view of the Churches of England and Rome.*"

Thus the good Catholic believes not merely that the wafer, though still such to the senses, has yet really undergone a change; but also that it is at one and the same time *flesh without blood, and flesh with blood.*

The distinction between the Scripture mysteries, as received upon the most truly rational grounds by Protestants, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, so often urged as an argument against our rule of literal interpretation, is very briefly pointed out in a work already referred to and the following note given upon it:—

"Repugnant to the evidence of our senses, &c.]" It is on this ground, and not merely on the incomprehensibility of the mystery (as the Romanists would charge upon us) that the doctrine of transubstantiation is rejected by Protestants. Turretin observes, "*Nullum dogma, quo posito*

tota religio corrui, admittendum est. Si admittatur transubstantiatio, sensibus credi non potest; si sensibus non credatur, corruunt argumenta ex miraculis Christi et ejus resurrectione ducta, pro religionis Christianæ veritate." Bishop Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures, Appendix, p. 389—note to p. 221, l. 14.

See also Stillingfleet's *Orig. Sacræ*, Book ii. ch. viii. § 7, where the rejection of transubstantiation is vindicated, whilst mysteries are received; but the distinction that the former is contrary to sense, is not adverted to.

On the subject of the evidence of the Romish miracles, the reader may learn what the Papists themselves have to say on their own behalf, from that extraordinary production, "*The End of Controversy*," by Dr. Milner, Letter xxiv. He will not fail to remark the extreme caution with which in every case of an alleged new miracle, a systematic inquiry, enjoined by public authority, is carried on. Nor will much doubt remain on his mind, as to the profound policy which dictates the mode of examination, or the rational sort of conviction with which the multitude of the faithful receive at length the decision of the commissioned enquirers.

The particular object of the Romish miracles, the particular point they are supposed to prove, the particular sort of divine authority they are brought forward to support, are topics of inquiry very essential to a just view of the subject: and to these I have briefly alluded above. That a miracle really wrought by *one* person can be no sort of proof of a divine commission lodged in any *other* person, or body of men, must, I conceive, be sufficiently evident; but it is in fact extremely difficult to make out from the testimony of Popish writers what end they themselves suppose the miraculous powers to answer, or what

Divine authority they are designed to authenticate. It should seem that these powers are considered to belong to the Church at large as a body, in virtue of our Lord's promise, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Nor is it at all casier to determine precisely where the infallibility resides. In order to prove such infallibility, it however appears to me essential that it, and the power of miracles, should be shewn to be possessed by one and the same person; or if not residing in one individual, that it should at least appear that the evidence of miracles applies precisely to the same body of men, and under precisely the same circumstances as the power of infallibility. On this subject the reader may consult the work last mentioned,—without deriving the least satisfaction.

The ambiguity in which the claim to infallibility is involved, will be found ably exposed by Bishop Marsh, in his "Comparative View," p. 190. See also Stillingfleet, Orig. Sac. Book ii. chap. x. § 6.

With respect to the question of tradition, the comprehensive and luminous statement of the argument by the same distinguished writer, it may safely be presumed, will be well known to the reader. (Comparative View, p. 65, &c.) Equally so will be his acute remarks on the province of the Church as a witness and keeper of Holy Writ, and on the authority of her testimony to the authenticity of the inspired writings. (P. 146, and note, p. 147.)

In reference to the whole question at issue between ourselves and the Romanists, as to a *sufficient ground of faith*, I of course refer to the celebrated work of Chillingworth. In the slight notice I have had occasion to take of this topic, it will readily appear to what extent my ideas

have been derived from that excellent source. The following references may be useful to some readers.

In "The Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation," chap. ii. § 1, &c. the grand question is discussed of the Romish additions to Scripture, and the sufficiency of Scripture for salvation. The dependence upon the Church for salvation, as required by the Church of Rome, is shewn to be unsafe, § 28. The question of the Canon of Scripture, and that an infallible judge is not requisite to settle it, is treated § 33, et seq. The Popish ground of faith is shewn to be insecure and insufficient, § 62, et seq. The discordances of the Romish authorized versions are pointed out, § 73; and on this point there is a curious confession of Bellarmine, that on the "infallible" Vulgate reliance cannot always be placed as to the true reading, § 73. [Bellarm. de verbo Dei, l. 2, c. 11.]

The various difficulties attendant upon making the Church an infallible oracle, are fully exposed, § 88, &c. And the further difficulties of ascertaining the genuineness of the Church's decrees, and the general want of an intelligible principle and ground-work of faith acutely pointed out, § 102, et seq. and the volume of Scripture upheld as the only rational authority and ground of faith, § 154.

In chapter vii. the orthodoxy of Protestantism is maintained, and (§ 56) the Bible, and the Bible alone, strongly asserted to be the only foundation of religion, and that on which the Church of England builds her faith.

On the sufficiency of Scripture, see also Hooker, Ecc. Pol. B. iii. § 8.

TO § 17.

But although a blind submission to the decrees of the Church be an insufficient and irrational ground of faith;

and though a captivation of the mind to a favourite theory be the equally unreasonable basis on which the professed disciple of reason builds his fastidious belief; still it may be asked, is not the faith of the sincere enthusiast, however extravagant in its details, yet solid in its foundation? To this inquiry I would reply by a reference to the confessions of some eminent leaders of this party, whose testimony will certainly be of the greatest weight, and whose sincerity is evinced by the very exposures they make of the workings of their own minds, in reference to the ground-work of their belief.

On one occasion, when Wesley had experienced great opposition, and his preaching seemed ineffectual, he expresses himself thus :—" I do hereby bear witness against myself, that I could scarce refrain from giving the lie to experience, and reason, and Scripture altogether." (1 Journ. p. 14.) Again, " when holy men have told me I had no faith, I have often doubted whether I had or no. In a storm I think, what if the Gospel be not true? a dream, a cunningly devised fable." (3 Journ. p. 12.)

In another place he gives the following confession from the mouth of a Moravian teacher :—

" Sin no longer reigned over me : but soon after I fell into grievous temptations. Then it came into my mind, I take all this pains to serve God, what *if there be no God?* How do I know there is? And on this I mused more and more, till *I said in my heart, there is no God.* Every day, for a *full year*, from morning to night, I groaned under this unbelief. I then said to myself, I will and do suppose there is a God. Immediately I felt a strange sweetness in my soul, which lasted for six weeks. I then fell into doubts of another kind—I believed in God but *not in Christ.* For above *four years* I found no rest by reason of this unbelief, till one day," &c. . . . (2d Journ. p. 60.)

Shortly after the above occurs another confession, not less explicit, from another of the same sect—"Seeing the great diversity of sects, I began to doubt whether any religion was true. For half a year these doubts perplexed me greatly, and I was just upon the point of casting off all religion." (Ibid. p. 65.)

On these testimonies it would be altogether superfluous to add a word of comment.

TO § 19.

As referring to the subject of rational views of religion, and pointing out in a remarkably clear and forcible manner, the distinct provinces of reason in regard to the *evidences* and the *doctrines* of revelation, I may be allowed to extract the following passage from that profound and masterly production, the Warburtonian Lectures of Mr. Davison.

"This coincidence of the religion in its evidences with the natural frame of our reason and principles of judgment, is worthy of notice, as contrasted with the tenor of some of its doctrines which do not so coincide. Some of its doctrines there are which we could not have anticipated before they were revealed, and now that they are revealed, we cannot say they are such as come within the command and grasp of our faculties—they are of the nature of discoveries, and they are made from a system of things of which an infinite Being is the author; and our concern in it is we know not how great: but it must be all which he may choose to appoint; and an implicit belief may be the only possible or the most expedient way of access to a part of the present knowledge which our interest in it re-

quires : whereas, hereafter our minds may be adapted to another comprehension of the truth so proposed. But, in the mean time, the revelation itself is authenticated to us by modes of reason, in which we have a direct satisfaction : the evidence of it meets precisely the faculty of judging which we already have. It rests on media of belief, to which no valid or intelligible exception can be made, as unfit in their kind, or inadequate in their principle, to the ends of a rational conviction. And the difference here adverted to between the proof of revelation, and the doctrine of it, that the one is perfectly level to our reason, and the other, in some particulars, is above it, is no more than agrees with the following reflection : that a proof would not be such to a mind which could not distinctly apprehend and judge of it : and therefore, to bring men to the first knowledge of a revelation, they must be addressed on the footing and principles of their nature : but as disciples and converts, to live by the religion, it is in course, and altogether in reason, that they accept the revelation itself as an authority for all it contains. They must learn first, by their present power of judgment, to see the religion to be from God : but under the conviction so admitted, the prerogative of faith will follow."—Disc. I. p. 28.

The clearness and force with which this representation of the case is given, are such, as I should imagine, ought to suffice for carrying conviction to every mind, professing to be guided by reasonable principles. The work from which it is taken is one which, in a pre-eminent degree, ought to claim the attention equally of the believer and of the enquirer : and especially if either are desirous of building upon the foundation of correct reason ; of being guided by the most profound discrimination ; and of being conducted to the most excellent practical application of

their convictions. With respect to the general subject of the use and abuse of reason, in matters of faith, or rather *the distinction between what is really the exercise of reason and what is not so*, it will hardly be necessary to refer to Locke's Essay, B. iv. ch. xvii. and xviii. sect. 7, &c. The reader who is desirous of further information, is referred to Bishop Van Mildert's Boyle Lectures, vol. ii. Serm. xvii. p. 159: also p. 169, et seq. numerous valuable references will be found in the notes to that discourse. See also Butler's Analogy, Part II. chap. 3, where the antecedent probability of mysteries is shewn with all the accustomed power of illustration and strength of this distinguished writer.

Bishop Stillingfleet (Orig. Sac. Book II. ch. 8. § 6, 7.) has discussed, in the most luminous manner, the province of reason in matters of faith: he has shewn the vague and uncertain character of what is called reason; that it in fact is nothing more than gratuitous theory. And he further proves, that if this principle of judging of the doctrines of religion be carried to its full extent, we shall be unable to draw the limit, or to establish the certainty of any thing.

On the same point, see also Dr. Edwards's Preservative against Socinianism, part 4. p. 1, &c.; and an argument from the mysteries of the natural world, p. 48, &c.

The following passage from one of the brightest ornaments of our Church, must not be omitted while we are upon this topic:

“ Whatsoever is against right reason, that no Faith can oblige us to believe. For, although reason is not the positive and affirmative measure of our faith, and God can do more than we understand, and our faith ought to be larger than our reason and take something into her heart, that reason can never take into her eye; yet in all

our Creed there can be nothing against reason. If true reason justly contradicts an article, it is not *of the household of faith*. In this there is no difficulty, but that in practice we take care that we do not call that reason which is not so: for although a man's reason is a right judge, yet it ought not to pass sentence in an enquiry of faith, until all the information be brought in; all that is within, and all that is without it; all that is above, and all that is below; all that concerns it in experience, and all that concerns it in act; whatsoever is of pertinent observation, and whatsoever is revealed, for else reason may argue very well, and yet conclude falsely: it may conclude well in Logic; and yet infer a false proposition in Theology: but when our judge is fully and truly informed in all that where she is to make her judgment, we may safely follow it, whithersoever she invites us."—Bp. Jer. Taylor's Worthy Communicant, Sect. 5. p. 168.

There is one more reference on this part of our subject, which, from the peculiar excellence of the passage, I cannot forbear making; it is to that storehouse of theological wisdom the Ecclesiastical Polity. The reader who may require to have his memory refreshed, will consult Book III. Sect. 8. The use and necessity of reason, in regard to matters of faith, is there maintained upon the soundest arguments against the fanatical hostility to the use of reason. And equally is the opposite error guarded against: the distinction between true and false philosophy is pointed out with an acute discrimination, which may well put to shame many of the boasted speculations of this enlightened age. The discussion occupies the whole section referred to: but there is one particular passage which, as being peculiarly forcible and apposite, I must here extract. [P. 379, vol. I. Oxf. Ed.] Speaking of natural reason, the illustrious author concludes:

“The apostle teacheth that nature hath need of grace; whereunto I hope we are not opposite, by holding that grace hath use of nature. Secondly, philosophy we are warranted to take heed of; not that philosophy which is true and sound knowledge attained by natural discourse of reason: but that philosophy which to bolster heresy or error casteth a fraudulent shew of reason upon things which are indeed unreasonable; and by that mean, as by a stratagem, spoileth the simple which are not able to withstand such cunning. ‘Take heed lest any spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.’ He that exhorteth to beware of an enemy’s policy, doth not give counsel to be impolitic; but rather to use all prudent foresight and circumspection, lest our simplicity be overreached by cunning sleights. The way not to be inveigled by them that are so guileful through skill, is thoroughly to be instructed in that which maketh skilful against guile, and to be armed with that true and sincere philosophy which doth teach against that deceitful and vain which spoileth. Thirdly; but many great philosophers have been very unsound in belief; and many sound in belief have been also great philosophers. Could secular knowledge bring the one sort unto the love of Christian faith? Nor Christian faith the other sort out of love with secular knowledge. The harm that heretics did they did it unto such as were unable to discern between sound and deceitful reasoning; and the remedy against it was ever the skill which the ancient fathers had to descry and discover such deceit. Insomuch, that Cresconius the heretic complained greatly of St. Augustine as being too full of logical subtleties. Heresy prevaieth only by a counterfeit shew of reason; whereby, notwithstanding, it becometh invincible, unless it be convicted of fraud by manifest remonstrance, clearly true and unable to be withstood.”

In connexion with the subject of the different grounds of faith taken up by persons of different mental constitutions, it may not be uninteresting to contemplate one instance in which the belief in mysteries was carried to a singular excess. This was Sir Thomas Brown, author of the *Religio Medici*, &c. So remarkably addicted was he to meditating exclusively on the mysterious parts of religion, that he was accustomed assign this singular reason for not wishing to have lived in the time of Christ and his apostles, that to have had ocular evidence would have rendered his faith too gross and palpable. [Rel. Med. p. 18.] And to such a height did his passion soar for the obscure and mysterious, that he actually complains that there are not impossibilities enough to satisfy his ardent faith. "I love," says he, "to lose myself in a mystery, and 'tis my solitary recreation to pose my apprehension with those involved enigmas and riddles of the Trinity and Incarnation." He professes also that the maxim of Tertullian is exactly to his taste: "Certum est, quia impossibile est," [ibid.] Similar sentiments are professed throughout the whole of this eccentric production.

TO § 22.

In here comparing together the perversions of the truth by the Romanist, the fanatic, and the rationalist; and shewing their near resemblance in principle and effect, I am indebted for the suggestion of the leading idea to the writings of Bp. Van Mildert. In his Bampton Lectures, Sermon III., the theological reader will hardly need to be reminded a similar comparison is most ably drawn. The

three parties mentioned are represented as each setting up principles equally injurious to the just pre-eminence of scriptural authority; and the refutation of the pretensions of each forms the subject of a separate division of the sermon. It is necessary to remark that these refutations proceed upon *general* grounds, and they are directed to the particular purpose of affording a foundation for the correct rules of scriptural interpretation. Against the Romanist, the sufficiency of scripture is proved from the express declaration of the sacred writers. Against the rationalist it is most convincingly argued, that if reason be a sufficient guide, revelation is superfluous; and that finite reason cannot be a competent judge of infinity. Against the fanatic it is observed that the infallibility of internal illumination is in all respects similar to that of Popery.

The three classes of opponents to the truth are then compared together in several very striking points of view. (p. 94.) And after thus shewing the *abuse* of the principles professed by these denominations of persons, the author in the next discourse proceeds to point out their proper and legitimate *use*; as subordinate to the authority of Scripture, but useful auxiliaries in the interpretation of its contents.

What I wish to shew by this slight sketch is, that if I have attempted a comparison in some respects similar, yet my *object* in doing so is *different*. The masterly comparison drawn by the Bishop is directed expressly to the purposes of a theological enquiry into the principles of scriptural interpretation. My object is to point out the similarity between these systems, all equally departing from simple scriptural belief, in respect to the *unphilosophical* nature of their fundamental principles; and to shew that the boasted

system of reason maintained by the self-conceited Unitarian differs in nothing as to its *philosophical* pretensions, from the superstition and fanaticism he affects to hold in such supreme contempt.

For a most instructive and interesting account of the origin, progress, and effects of the spirit of philosophizing on religious subjects, the reader is referred to the same author's Boyle's Lectures, Sermon 7. vol. i. p. 244. 2d ed.

The prevalence of that spirit is traced to the Platonism of the early times of the Christian Church, and thence shewn to have extended to the scholastic theology of the dark ages. Its further effects are clearly pointed out in perverting the simplicity of Christian truth about the age of the Reformation, in the next discourse, (Sermon 8. p. 300), and in particular the rise of Socinianism is traced to this cause; and the character of that system briefly and strikingly stated, (p. 310).

Some admirable remarks occur in the 9th discourse, bearing on the same subject, which though professedly relating to the prevalence of Deism in the 17th century, are yet very applicable in general to the delusions generated by a false spirit of philosophizing on religious subjects. To one passage in particular bearing directly upon the subject of our inquiry, I refer the reader, (Sermon 9. p. 321).

The design of the author being limited to the consideration of systems professedly opposed to revelation, actual Socinianism could not properly fall under his examination; but its principles being altogether the same as those on which the more openly avowed doctrines of infidelity were established, many of the acute remarks interspersed in the 10th discourse, on the opinions of the leading Deists, will be found to apply with equal force to the kindred sophistries of Unitarianism.

In the course of the historical view of infidelity continued in the next lecture, down to the present times, a remark occurs well deserving attention, respecting the great assistance given to the cause of unbelief by the prevalence of Socinianism, as well as other sorts of heresy and schism. The value attached by infidels to the labours of Dr. Priestley, in support of *rational religion*, as a powerful auxiliary at least to their own system, is clearly and ably shewn, (p. 409).

One more passage, peculiarly applying to the view of the subject here taken, occurs in the concluding discourse (Sermon 12. p. 437), "In those different kinds of apostacy (if such they may be called) which have been prevalent among *professors* of the faith : such as the worship of many mediators, rather than *one*, by the Romanists; the rejection of the Christian priesthood and sacraments by fanatics; and the perverse systems of heretics, who deny the personal dignity and the all-sufficient merits of the Redeemer; we may discern the same character of overweening self-opinion, the same disposition to "lean to their own understandings," and to trust to any inventions and innovations of their own, rather than "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls."

TO § 23.

It is not merely in the virtual mutilation of Scripture that fanaticism resembles Unitarianism and Popery; there are yet further instances on record, shewing the direct tendency of enthusiasm to an entire rejection of Scripture; or at least to assigning it quite as low a value as either the decrees of the Church or the theories of So-

cinianism would give it. Thus David George, the Anabaptist, among other extravagancies, maintained that his doctrines were such as to render those of the Old and New Testament utterly useless. (Brandt's Hist. of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 75.) Another yet more striking instance is that of Antonia Bourignon, of whom some account may be found in the preface to Leslie's "Snake in the Grass." (Works, vol. ii. p. 10.) "I have sometimes," she says, "transiently read the New Testament: but as soon as I began to read, I perceived in what I read all my sentiments explained; so that if I were to write the sentiments which I carry within me, I should compose a book like that of the New Testament: and it seeming to me that it would be useless to read what I did so sensibly possess, I left off to read." What the tendency of these sentiments was, which by internal illumination appeared so exactly to coincide with those of the New Testament, or more probably with which this internal illumination made the doctrines of the New Testament to coincide, by representing them in its own peculiar light, may be in some measure judged of by observing that one of the doctrines she subsequently taught was, "that there is no satisfaction made for the sins of men by the death and sufferings of Christ." (Ibid. p. 8.) Yet this person was the revered founder of a sect of fanatics, who held every thing like human philosophy or Socinianism in the most utter contempt.

Another example to the same effect is that of one of the fanatical preachers in the Rebellion, who after expatiating on the kingdom of Jesus now to be established, holding up a Bible, continued:—"Here is a book you have in great veneration, consisting of two parts, the Old and New Testament. I must tell you it is abolished: it contains beggarly rudiments; milk for babes; but now Christ

is in glory among us, and imparts a fuller measure of his spirit to his saints than this can afford, I am commanded to burn it before your faces." (Collier's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 861.).

The manner in which the enthusiastic founders and prophets of Quakerism denied the authority of the Scriptures may be seen at length in Leslie's "Snake in the Grass," sect. 7. Fox declares it to be blasphemy to say the Holy Scriptures are the word of God: yet he and another of the teachers command their own epistles to be read in their meetings "as the word of the Lord, and in the life and authority of God from whom they came." The principle on which they grounded their rejection of Scripture was, "What was a command of God in old time is not so to us, unless required by the same spirit anew." In conformity to which principle, a person was formally accused and censured at one of their meetings for having said, "That he preferred the Scriptures before the Friends' books." But it was not to their writings only, it was to their extempore preachings also, that they attributed this paramount authority. One of their preachers was asked, "Do you esteem your speakings to be of as great authority as any chapter in the Bible?" He answered in these words: "That which is spoken by the spirit of truth in any is of as great authority as the Scriptures and chapters are, *and greater*." (Leslie's Works, vol. ii. p. 59, 60.)

TO § 27.

The picture of Socinianism, given by the infidel authors of the *Encyclopédie* is peculiarly worthy of attention, as it cannot be charged with any of that spirit of

religious intolerance of which the Unitarians so regularly accuse the Clergy, when they represent them as differing in nothing from Deists. The description is as follows:—

“The Unitarians have always been regarded as Christian divines, who had only broken and torn off a few branches of the tree, but still held to the trunk: whereas they ought to have been looked upon as a sect of philosophers, who that they might not give too rude a shock to the religion and opinions, true or false, which were then received, did not chuse openly to avow pure Deism and reject formally and unequivocally every sort of revelation, but who were continually doing with respect to the Old and New Testament, what Epicurus did with respect to the gods, admitting them verbally, but destroying them really. In fact, the Unitarians received only so much of the Scriptures as they found conformable to the natural dictates of reason, and what might serve the purpose of propping up and confirming the systems they had embraced. A man becomes a Protestant;—soon finding out the inconsistency of the essential principles of Protestantism, he applies to Socinianism for a solution of his doubts and difficulties: and he becomes a Socinian. From Socinianism to Deism there is but a very slight shade, and a single step to take—and he takes it.” Quoted in Richardson’s *Vindication of the Athanasian Creed*, &c. p. 8.

I must here make one or two remarks relative to the subject of the highly interesting and instructive work of Mr. Rose on the Protestantism of Germany. The topics there so ably discussed, have an immediate connexion with those of my remarks. In the rational system of religion, as professed in Germany, the reader will observe the complete developement and full perfection of those principles which I have here been examining in their embryo. The information comprised in Mr. Rose’s volume exhibits

the most exact *practical* exemplification of what I have here attempted to discuss in *theory*. It has not fallen within my plan to enter into any very detailed examination of the extravagancies of the Unitarian school; these however are mere trifles, the mere efforts of rationalism in its childhood, compared with those of its more advanced stage in Germany. The slight examination, then, which I have here cursorily begun, might be carried on to an almost unlimited extent in pointing out the thousand inconsistencies, contradictions, and absurdities of rational religion, when carried to its full length.

In reference to the line of argument I have adopted, and the *particular point of view* in which it has been my endeavour to place the subject, I would further observe that Mr. Rose has professedly abstained from any particular discussion as to the just limits of reason in matters of faith. He has all along conducted his admirable observations on the views alluded to, as being attempts of *reason to subject religion* entirely to her decision, (see p. 2. 20, &c.); and as an unwarrantable intrusion of human philosophy into the investigation of Divine truth. (P. 28. 67, &c.)

But there is one passage, which as bearing more especially on this point, I must extract. Speaking of the principles on which the rationalists profess to proceed, the author describes their idea of reason and its office in the following terms:—

“Reason, which is to be the sole judge, must, if its office be rightly bestowed, at least be *capable* of deciding on every thing offered to her examination, that is to say, in religion thus subjected to the decision of human reason, there must be nothing which it is beyond the power of human reason to comprehend, for without comprehension there can be no decision. Those things in religion

which to others are obscure and difficult, to those who pursue this road must be as clear as the windows of the morning. They must explain them, or explain them away. But when religion is thus placed at the mercy of reason, it is manifest that the first step will be to treat religious matters like any other science within the province of reason. Questions will arise, not only as to the value or truth of particular doctrines, but as to the meaning and scope of the system itself. It may have come down to us clogged with many human additions, and distorted by many human views. It may perhaps never have been rightly understood from the beginning, and may be still *an unknown country, to reward the labours and the penetration of future discoverers.* The same methods which the natural philosopher pursues in arriving at the knowledge which he presumes he possesses of chemistry or geology must be employed by the Christian philosopher in arriving at Christian truth. Truth (according to the scientific plan of religion) as set before us in the Scripture, is the *raw material* which is to be worked up by human ingenuity, or rather the hieroglyphic system, the solution of which is to be achieved by human penetration. The doctrines which have commanded the assent, directed the faith, and warmed the hopes of the great, the wise, and the good, in every age of Christianity, may perhaps in every age of Christianity have been misunderstood, or not understood at all. The theologian must *mine for the long hidden treasure of truth, and like the naturalist must make new discoveries, and modify his belief accordingly.* When a sufficient number of facts is discovered, a system must be formed to which reason can form no objection; that is to say, a system which contains nothing transcending her powers. But as the name of Christianity is still to be written upon this system, it must at all events pro-

fess to rest, as we have said, on the basis of Scripture; and as the words and the facts of Scripture are occasionally somewhat more refractory than the imagination of the human heart, new systems of interpretation must be devised, and the words and facts of Scripture must change their meaning at the omnipotent command of reason, and must be made to accord with the system which her wisdom has erected; or when this is impossible, portions or rather masses of Scripture must be wiped away from the canon, and branded with spuriousness and imposture. Truth must no longer be recognized by external characters, but by its coincidence with the dictates of reason. And probabilities from external circumstances must afford us no matter for thought or conviction, but the system must itself be the measure and arbiter of probabilities." § 3.

The author here adverts to the principle assumed, and to the consequences resulting. My line of argument is this, suppose the principle were rightly assumed, could these consequences by any real philosophic rule follow from it? or to put the matter in a somewhat different form;—let us take this representation to be, as I conceive it is, a fair representation of the professed views of rationalism; and let us examine the course here pointed out by the test of its own principle: that is to say, let us suppose an enquirer endeavouring to penetrate into this *unknown country; pursuing the same methods* as those employed in *physical* investigation: working out a system from the *materials* afforded him by Scripture: *making new discoveries*, and *modifying* his belief accordingly: in short, setting out exactly in the track above described. My question is, by what principle of reason, with what shadow of consistency can he, *by the adoption of such views* at the commencement, be led to any such prepos-

rous consequences in the sequel, as those on which the author quoted so justly animadverts? It is, in fact, precisely on the very supposition here assumed, that I have above shewn the necessary philosophical result to be, the simple literal reception of Scripture.

As exhibiting in few and characteristic touches, the most prominent features of rationalism, I quote the following passages, which require no comment, from the same work.

“ But this statement, although sufficient to shew that the German churches have nothing in their constitution to check changes of doctrine, is not all. These churches boast of it as their very highest privilege, and the *very essence of a Protestant church, that its opinions should constantly change*. Hear the words of the most esteemed among their modern historians, ‘ Our divines recognize the necessity of inquiring, of correcting, and of ameliorating their belief, as often as any new views require it; and they do not deny the possibility of making that belief more free from false explanations and arbitrary adjuncts, firmer in some parts, and more connected in all.’ And I am not here using an accidental or careless declaration, but one, the spirit of which runs through every work of the rationalizing German divines.”—Rose, p. 20.

Wegscheider, describing the constitution of the German church, says:—“ From these synods, finally, are to be constituted ecclesiastical colleges of clerks and laymen, who are to deliberate on ecclesiastical matters, as *reason is more cultivated*, and the *right use* of Scripture more understood, submitting their decrees to the approbation of the sovereign.” (Rose, notes, p. 118.)

Again: Griesbach says that symbolical books are not to endure for ever, but that it is enough if divines follow the *newest* and best views.” (Note, p. 119.)

NOTES TO SECTION II.

TO § 3.

IN reference to the ideas which we can frame of the Deity, I would refer the reader, who may be desirous of pursuing the subject, to the confessions of eminent philosophers, men of acknowledged depth of intellect, and who have possessed, if any have possessed, in a most eminent degree the qualifications for forming accurate ideas on this subject: these will assuredly afford a sufficient specimen of the utmost degree of clearness, to which the human intellect can advance in regard to such topics.

The philosophical reader will, in the first place, of course be well acquainted with Sir. I. Newton's celebrated "scholium" at the end of the Principia. As this is too long for insertion here, and not susceptible of abridgement, I shall content myself by merely referring to it. [Tom. 3. p. 673. Ed. Le Seur et Jacq.]

Two other passages of a similar kind will be found in the opticks, Bk. 3. query 28. and 31. p. 344 and 378, 3d edition.

Additional statements of the same tendency are contained in his letters to Dr. Bentley. See Horsley's Newton, v. 4. p. 429. ; also in the Recensio commercii epistolici contained in the same vol. p. 495.

For Locke's ideas on this subject, consult the Essay, Bk. 2. ch. 23. § 33 and 35. And on the ideas of Infir-

nity as applied to the Deity, ch. 17. § 1. 15. 21.: also compare Bk. 2. ch. 15. § 3. 12, with Bk. 4. ch. 10.

See also a collection of the papers by Addison on religious subjects, appended to his Evidences, Oxford 1801. p. 86 et seq. and p. 97. or Spectator, No. 565. and particularly the introduction to that volume.

As to the views of these eminent men, it is far from my intention to maintain that they are free from defects :—they are perhaps open to some difference of opinion as to the propriety of particular expressions, but what I wish to observe is this: let them be carefully examined by the man who pretends to rational views: and suppose them taken in all their exactness, I ask what is there in them which can in the smallest degree *come into collision* with the more particular doctrines subsequently given in Revelation? And if this be the case when we assume them in their most definite form, *a fortiori*, it will be so, if that form be thought too definite and precise.

For the sake of many readers it may not be superfluous here to extract a passage from Hooker, the piety and eloquence of which alike have caused it to be frequently quoted; and perhaps considering the nature of the subject, and the character of our opponents, it can hardly be quoted too often.

“ Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the most High; whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of his name; yet our soundest knowledge is, to know that we know him not as indeed he is, neither can know him, and our safest eloquence concerning him, is our silence, when we confess without confession, that his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few.” [Eccles. Polity, Book I. § 2.]

to §. 6.

I have argued upon the supposition that the passages of Scripture in proof of the doctrine of the Trinity are taken in their simple and ordinarily received construction. At the same time the reader will be well aware with what profound subtlety other constructions have been put upon almost all such passages by Unitarian Commentators. In particular the passage to which I have referred Rom. ix. 5. has afforded room for a singularly clever display of their critical acuteness. I shall not here enter upon any examination of these criticisms, but shall merely refer to the work of Archbishop Magee, and Dr. Spry's "Two Sermons preached before the University of Oxford; with an appendix containing critical remarks on Mr. Belsham's new translation and exposition of St. Paul's Epistles."

The principal passages in the New Testament which most strongly assert the doctrine in question, are of course made out by the Unitarians to assert any thing but that doctrine. And the fallacies and puerilities to which these commentators have recourse in their attempts to explain away the meaning of Scripture, will upon the slightest examination be found the most empty and futile which it is possible to conceive. And it must surely be a subject of no small surprize to see these pretended advocates of reason, who in the first instance maintain their doctrines upon the most abstruse principles, stoop to find arguments in defence of them from such low and wretched expedients. Such a mode of proceeding can prove little else than the hopelessness of the cause which can catch at such miserable supports. Nor perhaps will the course pursued in resorting to such mere subterfuges, too absurd to be for a moment adopted by any sound or well informed mind, tell much for the honesty of the advocate who can per-

tinaciously uphold his cause with arguments of which in his own mind, he cannot but feel the emptiness.

From the consideration of the line of defence pursued upon such various grounds, we cannot but be led to a most instructive view of the reasonableness, consistency, and philosophic greatness of this self called "rational" system of religion. It is truly edifying to see these pretended philosophers leaving their metaphysical flights, to ferret out some obscure construction which may be put upon a particle or an accent; some possible meaning which might by the utmost stretch of contrivance be given to a passage, *if* we might consider one word as an interpolation, another misplaced, and a third misinterpreted. And all this for what purpose? to simplify and explain on rational principles what must otherwise be mysterious, and therefore according to their logic contradictory to reason. If this be all I confess it does not appear to me that we gain much. To my own apprehension such attempts at interpretation are in themselves quite as contradictory to reason as I can well convince any thing to be.

We may apply with peculiar propriety the words of a learned writer:—

"Nos simplicitatem unice consecramur; verba ut usus hominum postulat, accipimus, nec aliter quam sana ratio jubet, interpretamur. Illi omnia contra: qui quidem universas ingenii vires intendunt, ut vim dictorum sacrorum multis variisque ambagibus, verborum contorsionibus, novis interpunctionibus, emendationibus denique enervent, et a naturali sensu deflectant. Ita qui *rationem* sempter nobis obtrudunt, id faciunt ipsi, quod *ratio* fieri posse negat." Mosheim Disert. ad sanc. Discip. p. 341.

For some remarks on the Socinian mutilations of Scripture to get rid of the history of the miraculous conception, see Bishop Horsley's Sermons, V. 3. p. 84.

In relation to the employment of metaphysical terms in our statements of these doctrines, I cannot refrain from quoting the following short but excellent remark from the pen of Bishop Van Mildert. It occurs in the life of Dr. Waterland, prefixed to the Bishop's edition of his works, where the Author is upon the subject of the Socinian controversy:

"To discard metaphysics altogether from such subjects is perhaps impossible; but to attempt either to establish or to defend purely *divine* truth upon principles of human science, is to forget that our knowledge of the truths themselves originates in another source, and that they can neither be proved or disproved from any intrinsic information that can be brought to bear upon them. Yet upon such grounds rest most of the subtleties of Arian writers. Metaphysical definitions of *unity, person, substance*, are assumed as postulates to establish one hypothesis or to refute another; as if it were demonstrable that the mode of existence perceptible to our faculties in the visible world, must of necessity be the same with that which belongs to the world invisible: or that which we discern by the testimony of sense and experience, can be an adequate criterion of that which is capable of no such testimony."

Life and Works of Waterland, vol. i. § 9. Oxford, 1823. See also the same author's Bampton Lectures, Sermon 6. p. 210.

In using the creeds and formularies of the Church, where terms not of Scriptural origin are introduced in reference to the mysteries of Scripture, we ought carefully to keep in mind the distinction, that in asserting the articles of such a creed we are in truth asserting nothing

more than the literal doctrine of Scripture, comprehended indeed, for brevity's sake, in some one term of human invention; the use of which has been sanctioned by the general adoption of the Church through a long series of ages. The distinction should be borne in mind, between asserting a doctrine which we comprehend, in terms of our own choosing, best adapted to express that comprehension; and asserting a doctrine which we do not comprehend, stated in the terms employed by the person or document on whose authority we receive it. Let the dogmatical proposition of the creed, and of the person professing that creed, be taken in its strictest sense, still we must consider that that proposition always either explicitly or tacitly refers to revelation, and is to be understood as intending to convey not any doctrine of his own invention, but that of the sacred writers.

So numerous and so well known are the various productions of our most eminent divines, on the subject of the Holy Trinity, and especially on the Athanasian Creed, of whose labours I have availed myself in this portion of my work, that it would be superfluous to particularize them. The masterly productions of Dr. Waterland, and the acute discussions of Leslie, it will easily be seen have principally been my guides. The profound defence of the Athanasian Creed in the Eccles. Polity, Book v. sect. 42, and the discussion respecting the Divinity of Christ, sect. 51—54, may be particularly referred to. As also in reference to the absence of contradiction in our statement of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as deducible from the impossibility of a contradiction subsisting between terms involving incomprehensible ideas, Leslie's Socinian Controversy discussed. Dial. 1. p. 6. Ed. 1708, 4to.

See also Dr. Edwards's Preservative against Socinianism, part 4. p. 44.: and the recent work of Dr. Miller on the doctrines of Christianity and the Athanasian Creed,

&c. together with other recent publications on the same subject, will be found noticed in the *Christian Remembrancer*, January, 1826.

TO § 10.

In reference to the question of philosophical belief, the reasoning enquirer will not fail to examine Bp. Horsley's celebrated *Letters in Controversy with Dr. Priestley*. I would refer particularly to one passage (Letter 17, p. 276.) in which the progress of Dr. H's conviction on the subject of the Holy Trinity is most clearly and forcibly developed, from a state of doubt and hesitation up to the firmest and most rational belief. Another equally excellent passage should be consulted, in his "*Tracts in Controversy with Priestley*," p. 458.

These testimonies are of peculiar value as coming from a man of such acknowledged eminence in science, and such power and originality of thought. Every one who is capable of candid discrimination, and of a just apprehension of the value of arguments, cannot but regard this controversy between two such champions, as perhaps one of the fairest trials on record in which real philosophy triumphed over empty theory, and sound religion over dangerous error. But Horsley's philosophy was not of the right sort to please the Unitarian illuminati: they are the disciples of a different and more theoretical school; and but little versed in the logic employed by the Newtonians. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that they should view the result of the discussion in a different light.

TO § 12.

There is one instance to which I must refer, as affording the most complete notion possible of the Unitarian

principles of theological enquiry. Dr. J. P. Smith informs us that a young Unitarian preacher had openly maintained, that, though it should be proved that the writings of the Apostle John most positively affirmed the Divinity of Christ, it would follow from thence, not that the doctrine was true, but *only that John was mistaken!* Dr. J. P. Smith's Testimony, &c. Vol. I. p. 57, note.

TO § 14.

The argument deducible from the admission of the existence of the Deity, is hinted at by Mr. Norris in his treatise on "Reason and Faith," chap. 10, p. 325. Where he has also adverted, on the same principle, to the belief in the creation of the world; unquestionably one of the most inconceivable doctrines, though evinced by the most irrefragable proofs: he points out with the most convincing clearness [p. 328.] that the Socinian principles, if carried to their full extent, must lead to absolute Atheism. And it appears to me worth examining whether the same principle does not go still further, and require us to deny our own personal existence, and that of the material world around us.

The very existence of physical objects is a point which we cannot explain. The impressions of external objects on our senses are insufficient to teach their existence, except as coupled with the mysterious powers of consciousness in ourselves. Let any man who is disposed to take what he calls rational views, and to object to the mysteries of religion, commence his speculations where they certainly ought to commence, with an enquiry into his own existence, and that of objects around him. Let him here set out with the determination to reject every thing which he cannot comprehend, on whatever evidence it may be supported: let him define wherein consciousness consists:

let him say how he feels his own existence : and if he can reduce it to any definite explanation, he may then proceed a step further and try what he can do with the existence of material objects : it is probable that both the one sort of conviction and the other are in their nature entirely incapable of being reduced to any thing definite. And it is certain that to whatever sort of definite conception we fancy we can reduce the one it can only be by assuming the truth of the other. Thus to obtain even an hypothetical explanation of our own existence we must presuppose and admit that of material objects ; and in order to comprehend the latter we must presuppose a comprehension of our own existence : thus we must for ever go on arguing in a circle ; and as each explanation necessarily involves an idea which is incomprehensible, the rationalist ought to reject both the one and the other.

TO § 16.

In order to substantiate the charges brought against the Romish Church as to over-refinement upon the Scriptural faith in the Trinity, in her dogmatical decrees, and in the writings of her approved divines it may be satisfactory for the sake of many readers to select out of the mass of evidence which might be produced, a few of the most striking examples which may serve as specimens. To the theological student these will of course be familiar.

The scholastic theology did not gain much ground till the 11th century. In this age Roscelin, professor of Divinity, at Compeigne, maintained the proposition, "that the three Divine Persons are three things." This was however explained to be something different from Trithemism. [Du Pin, Eccles. Writers. Vol. 9. p. 125.]

This system came into general acceptance in the 12th century. The "Book of the Sentences," by Peter Lom-

bard, professedly designed to stop these intricate disputes by a collection of the opinions of the early fathers, was perhaps hardly free from the same faults; and, in fact, so far from answering the purpose, it only gave rise to numerous commentaries which produced new and endless controversies. This book was universally received, and its author obtained in consequence the distinctive title of the Master of the Sentences. It became in some measure the established text book of the orthodox faith, and it was on the ground of their being at variance with it that several subsequent opinions were condemned by councils. It may therefore be interesting briefly to state some of the peculiarities of the questions and decisions thus formally embodied and received by authority.

In the 1st Book, Sect. 4, the author discusses the question, "Whether it may be said that God the Father is begotten himself, or whether it ought to be said that he begot another God."—In Sect. 5. "Whether it may be said that the Father begot the Divine Essence, or the Divine Essence begot the Son, or whether one essence produced another; or whether the essence be neither produced nor producing?"—In the 6th comes a question as to "the generation of the Son; whether by Divine will or necessity?"—In the 8th an enquiry is raised respecting the Divine "Substance;" and it is maintained that "there is nothing in God that is not God."

To pass over many others of the same description, the 32d Sect. treats of what the author admits are difficulties: viz.—"Whether the Father and the Son mutually love one another by the Holy Ghost: or whether the Father be wise by the wisdom he has begotten." It will be quite unnecessary to continue a detail of any more of the subjects of his various discussions. There are four books, each consisting of nearly 40 Sections. The questions relate to the particulars of every other doctrine of the

Church, carried on with the same minuteness as those already mentioned. Many of them are trifling even to a more excessive degree than those above enumerated ; as " Whether Jesus Christ, quatenus Man, be a person or a thing." The whole subject of the incarnation, and the union of two natures in Christ, is treated in the same style. [Du Pin, vol. 10. p. 192.]

The thirteenth Century was the principal age of theological abstruseness. The recondite speculations of the " Scholastici" were scarcely exceeded by the extravagancies of the " Mystici," and as the principles of the latter struck at the very root of all rational belief and sound doctrine, so those of the former did away with all that was valuable in divine truth, by involving it in the interminable perplexities of their metaphysical systems. Among the former the renowned Thomas Aquinas shone most conspicuous. And though some of his writings were justly esteemed as sound and rational productions, the greater part of them were infected with all the faults common to his party. Yet this canonized Saint, this " Angelic Doctor," was accused of holding opinions contrary to the truth ; and his orthodoxy called in question by the Parisian professors. [Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 252.]

For an account of the subjects of his voluminous writings, see Du Pin, vol. 11. p. 69.

The first part of his " Sum of Theology," is entirely occupied by disquisitions on the Divine nature and essence ; on the relations and processions of the Persons of the Godhead, &c.

The disputes carried on by the Schoolmen in later times, consisted no less in vain, curious, and most presumptuous questions, in considering which, we are at a loss whether to be most surprised at the profane audacity of the questions themselves, or at the easy assurance and

confidence with which the disputants decide upon them. One instance may be mentioned in their dispute with some of the reformers, in which, amongst other questions, they debated and decided this:—Whether if the Son had, without the Father's consent, and without agreement with him, taken upon him our nature, and suffered, his sufferings would have been accepted, so as to have merited the pardon of sinners? An account of this dispute may be found in Vasquez Disput. 5. in part 3. Divi Thomæ. Edwards's Preservative against Socinianism, part 3. p. 108.

It may not be unimportant to observe here, that the Athanasian Creed cannot, in any degree, fall under the imputation of these scholastic refinements; its antiquity, even on the lowest estimate, being clearly far greater than that of the Scholastic Theology. This remark is made and supported with great ability by Dr. Miller, in his recent publication on the Doctrines of Christianity, and the Athanasian Creed, 1825, p. 156.

TO § 17.

The following notes respecting councils will serve for proof of what was said of them above.

At the third council of Sirmium, A.D. 357, was framed what is termed the Second Creed of Sirmium, the doctrines of which are Arian. The term *ὁμοούσιος* was expressly rejected, and it was declared that the Father is greater than the Son, and that the Son had a beginning.

A council at Antioch, A.D. 358, professed similar doctrines. And shortly afterwards the great body of the Eastern Bishops, though called together at Ancyra, (in the same year) for the express purpose of opposing

these Arian principles, and upholding the ancient faith, they yet professed the *ὁμοιούσιον*; and amongst other tenets expressly reprobated the *ὁμοούσιον*. The decree of the fifth Council of Sirmium was also to the same effect: A.D. 359.

The same year the Western Bishops assembled at Araminum. The Arian doctrines were in the first instance positively condemned; but not without opposition from a small party. These having interest with the Emperor, procured his authority to establish their creed; which, by degrees, they prevailed upon most of the other party to adopt. At the same time, the turbulent council at Seleucia, in the East, decided in favour of the Semi-Arian doctrines. But shortly afterwards the Nicene creed was, through the influence of the Emperor, signed by the Bishops of both parties.

These disputes were kept up by the Synod of Antioch, A.D. 361. And at the council of Alexandria, A.D. 362, the question of the three Hypostases in the Trinity was the subject of debate; but, through the efforts of Athanasius, peace and moderation were secured. The doctrine of the *ὁμοούσιον* was maintained by several subsequent councils in different places, though interpreted with some latitude by that of Antioch. A.D. 363. Arian and Semi-Arian councils were held in the following years, and others in opposition to them. The third council of Constantinople, A. D. 383. promulgated a creed differing little from the Nicene. [See Du Pin's Eccles. Hist. vol. 2. p. 262, et seq.] Yet these councils are all alike infallible, and equally recognized by the creed of Pious IV.

In reference to the idolatry of the Church of Rome, in admitting pictures and images of the Deity, [see the Morning Exercise against Popery, p. 476.]

Dr. Edwards, in his preservative against Socinianism,

shews the similarity between the Socinians and the Papists, in their mode of interpreting Scripture in several respects. [Pt. 4. p. 174. et seq.]

The older Socinians admitted that "the Man Jesus Christ," according to the letter of Scripture, had both the titles of Divinity ascribed to him, and also the honours of Divine Worship. But these they explain away by singular refinements upon the words of the first Commandment. They make out that this precept does not imply that the name of God is incommunicable. They adduce instances of angels and men who, as the delegates and representatives of God, had the same title : the Ark, the Temple, and the Cloud of Glory they say, were dignified with the same title, on account of the Divine presence and inhabitation. In a similar way, they interpret the communication of the Divine name to Jesus Christ, and the offering of Divine worship to him. They maintain that we may truly ascribe to Christ the title of God, but understand it as communicated to him solely by the will of the Father. In the same way we may worship him, as worshipping God represented by him. This being the distinction they draw, as intended to be preserved by the first Commandment, between the worship of one God, and that of many by the Heathens : their worship "terminating" in the particular Deity to whom it was addressed, and not being referred through him to one Supreme.

This Dr. E. shews to be precisely the same principle on which the Popish writers explained away the force of the second Commandment, making it lawful to worship images as representations of real beings, the saint being worshipped through the worship addressed to the image ; but not those of imaginary ones, where the worship "terminated" in the image.

This was the distinction made by Bellarmine [de Imag. lib. 2. chap. 5.] and Godwin in his Answer to Bishop Stillingfleet.

TO § 19.

The sort of idolatry which I have above laid to the charge of fanaticism, is fully substantiated by a vast number of instances, in which enthusiasts have deluded themselves with ideas of the actual appearance of God, who, in their own words, is described as visibly present, talking with them, &c. Wesley relates an instance of one of his followers, who "*saw* a crucified Saviour," when receiving the holy Sacrament:—the exact counterpart of the real presence in the mass. These and many more highly curious instances may be found in Bp. Lavington, *Enthus. of Papists and Methodists*. Vol. 1. p. 38, &c. P. 122. 130, &c.

The following testimony is closely in point in reference to the fanatical belief in mysteries. "The one referring all to the judgment of reason, was led to deny the truth of all that was above reason in Religion: the other referred all to *sense*, and contended, that without *evidence*, they had an immediate and intuitive perception of all the mysteries, and all the most exalted truths of Christianity." [Rose on Protestantism in Germany, p. 9.]

NOTES TO SECTION III.

TO § 2.

ON the subject of Divine Attributes, and the ideas we can frame of them, as well as other topics connected with these, and referred to in this enquiry, I had intended to have entered more at large; and especially in reference to the views of these subjects taken by several distinguished writers. Having, however, been induced to deviate from my original plan and greatly to compress the materials of this volume, I shall here content myself with merely referring the reader to one or two eminent authorities on these points.

From Archbishop King's Sermon on Predestination, (republished with valuable notes and an appendix by Dr. Whately, now Principal of Alban Hall,) I extract the following passage, which contains a remarkably striking and forcible representation of the views we can take of the Divine attributes and counsels; and though introduced expressly in reference to the subject of predestination, yet applies generally: (Disc. on Predest. p. 20, 21.)

"I have already told you, and I believe every considering man is convinced, that the nature and perfections of God, as he is in himself, are such that it is impossible we should comprehend them, especially in the present state of imperfection, ignorance, and corruption in which this world lies. He is the object of none of our senses, by which we receive all our direct and immediate perception

of things: and therefore, if we know any thing at all of him, it must be by deductions of reason, by analogy and comparison, by resembling him to something that we do know and are acquainted with. It is by this way that we arrive at the most noble and useful notions we have, and by this method we teach and instruct others. Thus, when we would help a man to some conception of any thing that has not fallen within the reach of his senses, we do it by comparing it to something that already has, by offering him some similitude, resemblance, or analogy, to help his conception. As for example, to give a man a notion of a country to which he is a stranger, and to make him apprehend its bounds and situation, we produce a map to him, and by that he obtains as much knowledge of it as serves him for his present purpose. Now a map is only paper and ink, diversified with several strokes and lines, which in themselves have very little likeness to earth, mountains, valleys, lakes, and rivers. Yet none can deny but by proportion and analogy they are very instructive: and if any should imagine that those countries are really paper because the maps that represent them are made of it, and should seriously draw conclusions from that supposition, he would expose his understanding, and make himself ridiculous: and yet, such as argue from the faint resemblances that either Scripture or reason give of the Divine attributes and operations, as if these must in all respects answer one another, fall into the same absurdities that those would be guilty of, who should think countries must be of paper, because the maps that represent them are so."

In reference to our ideas of the Divine attributes, there are some important observations in the notes to Mr. Davison's Warburtonian Lectures. [Note, p. 492.] The particular point in consideration is the Divine prescience;

but the author extends his remarks to the Divine perfections in general; he finds fault with Archbishop King's view of the matter, as representing our ideas to possess no resemblance to the reality of the attributes in their nature: whereas he upholds the belief that there is a real though most imperfect conformity of our ideas to their object.

I am disposed to enquire whether many such points of difference may not arise from difference in the *definition* of the attributes.

With respect to the existence of evil in connexion with the Divine goodness, the reader is referred to Dr. Berrian's Boyle Lectures, Ser. I. Dr. Gurdon, Ditto Ser. V. and Mr. Jones of Nayland, Works, v. 7., p. 300.

The Principal of Alban Hall finds fault with some writers who maintain that Scripture reconciles the difficulty of this subject. [Appendix to King on Pred. No. II. p. 118.]

The following extract will give his view of the matter. After quoting from the work of the Provost of Oriel, (Discourses on the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination, &c.) a passage pointing out the necessity of certain evils in order to the proof and trial of virtue, he proceeds:—

“And we had much better stop here than attempt to pry any further into the inscrutable plans of the Deity. That it was impossible for man to be so constituted as to attain the highest happiness, without this kind of moral discipline, I most firmly and reverently believe, simply because God *has* ordained things as they are, not because I can perceive *why* it was impossible. That any such sinless being as I have above supposed, actually exists, or can possibly exist, I am far from asserting.” He then quotes again from the same work:—

“To suppose that kind of moral excellence which leads to higher and higher degrees of happiness, to be attainable without previous trial, may for aught we know, be as absurd as to suppose a circle with unequal radii: and to suppose *trial* without *evil* seems to be equally absurd.” (Copleston, p. 61.) “All I contend for is, that *we* cannot *perceive* or *prove* (as Dr. King maintains we can) any thing contradictory in such a supposition; and that *for aught we know*, such an agent might be as free as ourselves.”—Whately on King’s Origin of Evil. (Appendix to King on Pred. No. II. p. 112.) See also on the point referred to, King on the Origin of Evil. Chap. iii. and v. Sect. 5.

The following open avowals are to me far more satisfactory than any attempts at explanation:—

“That evil exists, and that God is not the author of it, although the author of every thing else, undoubtedly carries with it as great a difficulty as the other question we were considering.”—(Copleston’s Disc. p. 93.)

“The only solution of this difficulty I apprehend must be taken from the imperfection of our understanding; for we have observed in a former place, that infinite goodness and infinite power, considered in the abstract, seem incompatible, which shews that there is something wrong in our conceptions, and that we are not competent judges of what belongs, and what is repugnant to, goodness. But God knows though we do not, and is good and righteous in all his ways; therefore whatever method he pursues is an evidence of its rectitude beyond all other evidences that can offer to us for the contrary.”—Tucker’s Light of Nature, c. xxvi. p. 237. (Whately, p. 106.)

It may perhaps be alleged that the remarks I have above made on our ideas of the Divine attributes are such

as to do away the force of one of the most popular arguments against Calvinism. I reply that the real argument against reprobation appears to me to be this, that it is not sufficiently proved from the letter of Scripture. If it were so, I conceive we must, however reluctantly, be necessitated to take it into account in framing our idea of the Divine beneficence. It is to be observed that this doctrine is not rejected by means of any metaphorical interpretations, or theoretical refinements, as that of merited punishments is by the Socinians.

Dean Tucker, in his Sermon on Rom. ix. 21., has argued that as the attributes of God are proposed as models for our imitation as far as lieth in us, it is dangerous to practical principles, to represent him as of such a nature as the doctrine of reprobation would imply; the same point is also discussed in Bp. Mant's Bampton Lectures, Disc. 4. It is also a general feeling that it would be profane to ascribe to the Deity any attribute at variance with moral goodness.

In reference to all these arguments I will only observe, that, excellent as they may be, as rules to guide us in cases where the interpretation is doubtful, they cannot be applied in opposition to facts, or unequivocal declarations of Scripture. The course then must be to confess *our ideas* to be wrong, or certainly inapplicable; or rather to remodel our ideas in accordance with the facts. This perhaps should be borne in mind in reference to what I have observed respecting the compatibility of evil, with the Divine goodness.

On the subject of future punishments, see King's Origin of Evil, Appendix, Sect. ii. § 4. 8. 9. also Butler's Analogy, Part I. chap. ii. p. 53. and note, p. 57. Ed. Oxford, 1807.

to § 15.

The well known argument of Bishop Warburton in favor of the natural and *necessary* efficacy of repentance, together with the refutation it has received, are adverted to by Archbishop Magee, Vol i. p. 95., and ii. 269.

The conclusion by mere natural light, that the Deity would forgive sins upon a sincere repentance, I confess appears to me not only altogether unfounded, but I am inclined to think that if by natural reason, (carefully excluding all bias which we may derive from an acquaintance with revelation,) we could make any inferences at all on the point they would be quite of an opposite character. I cannot help thinking that by the mere light of reason the most probable conclusion would be that of the exact and inexorable *justice* of the Deity. Such a conclusion would surely be that which would accord best with what we know of the natural world. It would surely be the idea which is most in analogy with the physical order of things that the Deity should impose equally exact and unalterable laws on the moral world. That sin and its punishment being once connected in the way of cause and effect, that connexion should never be broken by any deviation from the universal law.

It is, however, far from my intention to enter upon any controversial discussion of the subject. I have only made the above remark in reference to the mode of arguing of which the Rationalists are so fond; who in dwelling exclusively upon the consideration of the mercy and benevolence of the Deity (according to our limited ideas of those qualities) seem to forget or overlook the attribute of justice. And this too, upon their own principle, ought

to be similar in its operation to the same quality in human rulers. And consequently there would be as little ground for supposing any efficacy in repentance towards removing the penalty of sin, as there would be in the mere contrition of a condemned criminal towards obtaining his free pardon from an earthly sovereign.

That the doctrine of an atonement by a suffering Mediator is one which involves ideas far transcending any which the mind can grasp, is indisputable; but from this very circumstance we cannot say that those ideas are in any way inconsistent with each other. When ideas are definite, then, and then only, can we determine whether or not there is any inconsistency or contradiction between them. Many persons, however, not accustomed to such considerations, find a sort of harshness in this doctrine: for their sakes I extract the following passage, which may probably be of some force in the removal of any such apparent difficulty.

“ We know assuredly that God delighteth not in blood; that he hath no cruelty, no vengeance, no malignity, no infirmity, or any passion in his nature: but we do *not* know whether the requisition of an atonement for transgression, may not be *an emanation of his infinite mercy*, rather than a *demand of his infinite justice*. We do *not* know, whether it may not be the very best means of preserving the innocence and happiness not only of us but of all other free and intelligent beings. We do *not* know whether the sufferings of an innocent person, may not be productive of a degree of good, infinitely surpassing the evil of such sufferance; nor whether such a quantum of good could, by any other means, have been produced.”—Bishop Watson’s two Apologies, pp. 466, 467.

With respect to the antecedent reasonableness of a belief in the system of salvation by a Mediator, see Butler's Analogy, Part ii. ch. v. See also six Sermons before the University of Oxford, by the Rev. T. L. Strong, B.D. particularly the third discourse on the Atonement.

to § 31.

In endeavouring to point out some few of the irrationalities and inconsistencies of the Unitarian system, I have not thought it necessary to attempt to go into their creed in detail: for a sufficient exposition of it (in both senses of the word) the reader will of course refer to the Appendix of Archbishop Magee's work on Atonement, &c.

To the inconsistencies I have pointed out, many more might be added by any one who should take the trouble to make the slightest search into the writings of this sect.

The rational character of the mode of proceeding adopted by these profound theologians is sufficiently obvious in itself, and from the mere consideration of its principle. Such reflections, however, will be corroborated and assisted by the cogent remarks of the distinguished writer just named. (Vol. i. p. 197).

The direct tendency of the Unitarian scheme to fatalism has been most clearly and acutely pointed out by the Archbishop. (Vol. ii. Appendix, p. 395, &c.) And the glaring inconsistency in which the supporter of that system is involved is admirably exposed in reference to the doctrine of moral merit, which he professedly upholds.

This system of morality is expounded very fully by Mr. Belsham, in his "Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Enquiry," and in his "Elements." So fully, indeed, that at every

step it becomes more thoroughly unintelligible. The theory of the moral state of the brain seems nearly allied to that of Dr. Spurzheim.

The masterly dissection of the whole system by Archbishop Magee (Appendix, p. 393, et seq.) has rendered it unnecessary to enter into the details of the subject.

In the same invaluable work some account of the Unitarian doctrine of purgatory will be found. (Appendix, p. 389. 397). The principle of it as given in Mr. Belsham's own words is this :—

“ The sufferings of the wicked can be but *remedial*, and will terminate in a complete purification from moral disorder, and in their ultimate restoration to virtue and happiness.” Again, “ Moral evil must be expelled by the application of natural evil.” And if not fully effected in this life, “ the process must be carried on by the severer sufferings of a future retribution.” (Appendix, p. 389.)

Again, in a note, p. 698, “ These (the wicked) must be put under a process of cure more or less severe in proportion to the malignity of the moral disease.”

The Archbishop has pointed out that upon the Unitarian principles this purgatory would be quite as inconsistent with the Divine benevolence as the doctrine of eternal punishment. (Appendix, p. 397.)

His 24th note (Vol. i. p. 214,) on the Divine attribute of justice, is particularly deserving attentive examination, especially in reference to the particular topic of a future state of punishment.

From several luminous quotations brought forward in the same work, it would appear that the Unitarians are hardly decided whether they are materialists or not. For an admirable exposition of their opinions on this point, see Vol. iii. note, p. 253. It only appears to me a matter of surprise, how men professing to believe nothing which

they cannot comprehend, can be either materialists or immaterialists, because it is certain that neither of the one doctrine nor the other we can attain any clear definite comprehension. Their hesitation is perhaps therefore meant as a denial of both doctrines at once, which would be as reasonable as many other parts of their system.

It appears that this sect admit the general providence of God: they also believe in a future state, because (in Mr. Belsham's words) Jesus "by his rising from the dead has proved to us the certainty of a future life." (Appendix, p. 413.)

Surprising and inconsistent as this is, it is hardly more so than their belief in the miracles recorded in the Gospels. For the proof of this remarkable fact the reader is referred to the same work, Vol. iii. p. 200, et seq. It does not there appear that the facts of the miracles being wrought are either denied or explained away. The only question seems to have been in what sense the power belonged to Christ; whether by virtue of his own nature and will, or as if he were a mere instrument in the hands of God. The former seems to be the opinion at present, the latter was that of Dr. Priestley. The German rationalists have however fully vindicated themselves from the charge of *inconsistency* on this point. (See Rose, p. 144, et seq.)

For some acute remarks on the Unitarian views respecting the immortal principle in man, and the future state, the reader is referred to Bishop Horsley's Sermons, Vol. iii. sermon 34. p. 68. 82.

The curious avowal of the Socinians, that their religion differed little from that of Mahomet, may be found in Leslie's Works, Vol. i. p. 205: and the boast of the Mahometans, that they are "the stoutest of the Unitarians," in Ockley's History of the Saracens, Vol. i. p. 267.

Some strong evidence to the encouragement given by the Romish Church to the progress of Socinianism, in the hope of distracting and undermining the Church of England, will be found in Leslie's Works, Vol. ii. p. 94, &c. 560, &c.

TO § 23.

For some most able expositions of the arrogant and profane pretensions of the fanatical believers in the scheme of predestination, to unsinning perfection, the reader is referred to the Bampton Lectures of Bishop Mant. In the third discourse a variety of quotations will be found exhibiting in the most striking manner the presumption of these pretensions, (see p. 138, et seq.); and more particularly the 8th discourse should be consulted where the question of unsinning perfection is discussed and illustrated by numerous testimonies from fanatical writers, (p. 468, &c.)

See also the acute comparison drawn between the fanatical and the Unitarian ideas of human perfection by Archbishop Magee, vol. i. p. 158, &c.

The more than mortal sanctity ascribed by the Church of Rome to her saints, is equally notorious. But the following is one among many other instances which might be quoted, shewing that precisely the same extravagant pretensions were upheld in former ages by the votaries of Popish superstition. It is extracted from Bishop Stillingfleet, on the idolatry of the Church of Rome, to which learned work the reader who requires further information is referred.

“ The Fratricelli, or little brothers, a branch of the

Franciscans, stiffly maintained the doctrine of perfection ; asserting that a man may in this life attain to so great perfection as to live without sin ; and then he is above ordinances in Church and State," p. 255.

An acute comparison of several cases in which this perfection was pretended to by Romanists, with the similar pretensions of modern enthusiasts, will also be found in Bishop Lavington's *Enthus. of Papists and Methodists*, Vol. i. p. 37.

TO § 34.

The following are specimens of the Romish arguments respecting future punishments:—

"Negamusposse Deum juste punire peccatum quodlibet etiam veniale, poena omnium gravissima quæ est mors æterna." (Bellarm. de amiss. Grat. l. 1. c. 14. p. 92.) "Etiamsi omnia peccata venialia, simul colligerentur in unum numquam efficerent id quod facit unum Letale." (C. 13. p. 91.) "etiamsi nullum esset peccatum Dei nobiscum de remissione poenæ adhuc tamen perspicuum esset peccatum veniale ex sua natura non inducere reatum poenæ sempiternæ." (C. 4. p. 95.) The most positive and presumptuous assertion is this of Bellarmine:—"Injustum est punire peccata venialia poenâ eternâ." De amiss. Grat. L. 1.

That under the term venial sin, the Romish casuists contrive to include nearly all the ordinary offences of which men are guilty, may be found clearly established in the morning exercise against Popery, p. 447. where are also many good observations on the tendency of these corruptions of the truth.

TO § 38.

Whitfield, so vehement an assertor of the atonement of Christ, nevertheless talks of his own sufficiency to combat his spiritual enemy, and of that sufficiency communicated to his flock, in the very words applied in Scripture to the Redeemer. Thus; “.... Though Satan had for some weeks been *biting my heel*, God was pleased to shew me that *I should soon bruise his head*.” [First Dealing, p. 46.] Again, “Though Satan is permitted to *bruise our heel*, yet *we shall in the end bruise his head*.” [Third Journal, p. 86.]

As to the presumption of Dr. Priestley in setting up himself as superior to Christ, in order that the reader, who is not versed in the mysteries of Socinianism, may not refuse credit to the assertion I have made; the following may serve as a proof of it.

In one of his own Letters the following passage occurs: our Lord, he says, “was a man fallible and peccable, misled by vulgar prejudice, and apt to misapply the Scriptures;” “had not plenary inspiration,” and was “*inferior to an enlightened man of modern times*.” That this enlightened man of modern times was the Doctor himself, appears from his comment on the Lord’s being the light of the world, on which he exclaims, “O thou man of Nazareth, after eighteen centuries, a *greater than thou* has arisen, who, though an admirer of thy virtues, and a believer in thy mission, has discovered, that, to follow thee implicitly, would *lead him into mistakes*: and who at length has proclaimed thine imperfections, detected thine errors, and convicted thee of ignorance and sin.” I give this as quoted in Dr. J. P. Smith’s Testimony, &c. Vol. i. p. 67, and in Richardson’s Vind. of the Athan. Creed, Note, p. 4.

He also accused St. Paul of “arguing inconclusively,”

and said that "his writings so abounded with analogies and antitheses, that *no very serious stress could be placed upon them.*" Richardson's Vind. p. 5.

Mr. Belsham has brought similar accusations against St. Paul. See Abp. Magee, Vol. ii. p. 462.

The instance of an unitarian teacher who affirmed that the Apostle John was mistaken, I have mentioned in another place.

With respect to the profane pretensions of the Franciscans, for the sake of many readers it may be proper to mention that this most remarkable, and in truth, appalling instance of superstitious blasphemy is to be found in the work of Bartholomew Albizi, a Franciscan of Pisa, entitled, "The Book of Conformities between the lives of Jesus Christ and St. Francis." Milan, 1510. This book was originally published with the licence and approbation of the general chapter of the Franciscans:—they declared it to be written "by the favour of God, and wanting no correction;" thus in fact giving it a sort of Scriptural authority. It was afterwards re-published at Bononia, when it seems some alteration was judged necessary, and many of the most extravagant fictions, and disgusting blasphemies were omitted. The title of the work sufficiently conveys an idea of its contents. It applies the principal prophecies of the Old Testament to St. Francis. It asserts him, upon comparison, to have greatly surpassed both the Apostles, and our Lord himself in his miraculous powers. And from the authority of this book, it became the universally received doctrine among the Franciscans; "that Jesus Christ saved the world before St. Francis came, but he afterwards." The story of the miraculous transfer of the five wounds of Christ to St. Francis, was upheld by several Papal Bulls, and "the Book of Conformities" received the same sanction and approbation, [Mosheim, Vol. iii. p. 335.]

Bonaventure maintained that it had been revealed to him that St. John in the Revelation meant by the Angel who had the seal of the living God, no other than St. Francis.

The intercession of St. Francis was considered more efficacious than that of Christ : their saying was, " *Christus oravit et Franciscus exoravit.*" [Morning Exercise against Popery, p. 528.] These extraordinary pretensions gave rise to the well known lines by the Jesuit Horatius, quoted in Hooker's Works, Vol. iii. p. 540. Oxford Ed.

With respect to the multitude of inferior Mediators recognized by the Church of Rome, it will suffice to refer to one or two of the most striking instances.

Thus in the " *Prosa de Virg. Maria,*" in the " *Missæ propriæ Festorum,*" published by authority at Rome, and amended according to the decree of the council of Trent, the last " *Prosa*" concludes thus ; " *Benedicta per tua merita, te rogamus, mortuos, suscita, et dimittens eorum debita, ad requiem sis eis semita O Maria. Amen.*"

But there are other instances in which the mediation of the saints is appealed to in far stronger, and, in truth, more revolting terms. The " *Primer*" in the office for the festival of St. Thomas of Canterbury, has, in one of its prayers, the following expression ; " We pray thee, *through* St. Thomas's blood, which he for thee did spend," &c. If there be any meaning in words, these surely ascribe to this canonized Saint, the very office of the Redeemer. [See British Critic, No. 1.]

Again, no subtilties of distinction, no Jesuitical sophistries, no mental reservations, can possibly disguise or explain away the obvious meaning of the following expressions, quoted not from an obsolete formulary in a dead language, but from the popular manual of English Papists at the present day. " The Roman Missal for the

use of the Laity," &c. published by Keating, London, 1806, the Collect for St. Nicholas' Day, Decr. 6th.—“ O God, who by innumerable miracles hast honoured blessed Nicholas the Bishop, grant, we beseech thee, that by *his merits and intercession* we may be delivered from eternal flames.” P. 527

The Collect for St. Patrick's Day also appeals to *his merits and intercession*, p. 562, and numerous other instances may be found in the Collects for other Saints' days.

If the Papists really wish to get rid of these obnoxious expressions, they might possibly derive some useful assistance from the disciples of the unitarian school, who are peculiarly well skilled in all the critical and metaphysical refinements to which such terms as “merit,” “intercession,” &c. can be subjected, in order to give them a greater congeniality to the spirit of an enlightened age.

An “improved Version” of the Missal, and a “rational exposition” of the breviary would be works, eminently calculated to display at once Catholicism in its most modern and liberal form, and the high value and universal application of *rational* principles of interpretation.

TO § 39.

On the doctrine of Justification it will suffice to quote the authorised formulary of the Romish Church: the Council of Trent makes this declaration, “ Siquis dixerit, *solâ fide* impium justificari, ita at intelligat *nihil aliud* requiri, quod ad justificationis gratiam consequendam co-operetur, anathema sit.” [Sess. 6. Can. 6.]

Again we have as follows :—

“ Cum enim ille ipse Jesus Christus tanquam caput in membra, et tanquam vitis in palmites, in ipsos participatos jugiter virtutem infleat, quæ virtus bona ipsorum opera semper antecedit comitatur et subsquitur, et sine qua nullo pacto Deo grata et meritoria esse possent, nihil amplius ipsis justificatis deesse credendum est quo minus plene illis quidam operibus quæ in Deo facta sunt, divina legi, pro hujus vitæ statu, satisfecisse, et vitam æternam suo etiam tempore, si tamen in gratia decesserint, consequendam, vere promeruisse censeantur.” [Sess. 6. Cap. 16.]

Siquis dixerit hominis justificati bona opera ita esse dona Dei ut non sint etiam bona ipsius justificati merita, aut ipsum justificatum bonis operibus et non vere mereri augmentum gratiæ vitam æternam, &c. anathema sit. [Can. 32.]

Other quotations exhibiting the corruption of the doctrines of justification by Popish writers, may be found in “the Morning Exercise against Popery,” pp. 448. 452, &c. 1675. 440.

From the same work also I extract the following peculiarly strong passages, shewing the Romish doctrine of merit in its clearest light.

Quod dicebamus . . . justitiam et charitatem in hac vitâ non esse perfectam, comparatrine duntaxat ad illam patriæ reputandum est, [Dominicus a Soto de Not. et grat. L. III. Cap. 4. p. 134.]

The council of Trent calls it “Justitiam candidam et immaculatam.” [Sess. 5. p. 7.] In the Trent catechism it is “Divina qualitas in animâ inhærens . . . quæ animarumstrarum omnes maculas delet, eâ (charitas) siquidem est verissima, plenissima, perfectissima, justitia. [Bellarm. de Justif. L. 2. c. 16. p. 806.]

Charitas culpam delet per actum suum proprium, poenam autem tollet per opera satisfactoria quæ ipsa charitas imperat. [Bellarm. de purgat. Lib. 2. c. 3. p. 1381.]

Habemus primum effectum formalem justitiæ, id est charitatis habitualis, divinitus infusæ, esse de medio tollere ac deleri peccatum. Bellarm. de justifi. L. 12. c. 16.

For a full exposition of the Romish perversion of this doctrine, see Hooker's discourse of Justification, § 5, et seq. Works, Vol. iii. p. 434. Oxf. Ed. See also Chillingworth's Rel. of Prot. chap. 7, § 31.

That the belief in a sanctification by sensible impulses is virtually a sort of justification by individual merit, as above maintained, is corroborated by the remarks of Mr. Law, (Treatise on Regen. p. 85, &c.) where he shews with great acuteness that the doctrines of Methodism are in fact opposed to real humility, and lead to self-justification.

to § 40.

Bishop Lavington mentions, among many others, one highly curious instance of the close resemblance between Popery and fanaticism. This is respecting the efficacy of the Holy Communion. It is made clearly to appear, from Wesley's own confession, that he viewed it as a mere "opus operatum." (Enthus. of Papists and Meth. Vol. i. p. 116.)

to § 43.

To obtain some idea of the *practical* tendency of fanaticism, and of the gross immoralities which were allowed, and even sanctioned by it, see the same work, Vol. i. p. 118, &c.

The comparison I have attempted in the course of the above remarks, between the rational and the fanatical extremes of deviation from the plain doctrine of Scripture, is fully borne out, and excellently illustrated, by the statement given in Mr. Rose's work before mentioned, respecting the strong re-action which in Germany carried many from the one excess into the other. And in exact accordance with the same principle we cannot contemplate without deriving a most instructive lesson, the remarkable fact that this re-action, so powerfully impelling many into the wildest mysticism, was, at the same time, equally efficacious in driving others into the bosom of the Church of Rome; and into the adoption of her imposing superstitions. (See Disc. 4, pp. 94. 100, &c.)

The *liberality* of the German rationalizers is exactly on a level with that of the English fanatics. As the latter will not allow that the gospel has ever been preached, except where they introduce their tenets, so these speculatists contemptuously styled the age preceding that in which their extravagancies were promulgated, "the slumber of theology," and "an age of theological barbarism:" an age which, nevertheless, produced some of the brightest ornaments of German theology. (P. 33, &c.)

I have already had occasion several times to refer to the excellent work of Dr. Edwards, the "Preservative against Socinianism;" in relation to the topics in my 3d Section, it should be particularly consulted.

In the 1st part will be found a statement of the general scheme of Scripture doctrine opposed to that of Socinianism: and the general impiety and bad practical tendency of this system are forcibly pointed out.

Part 2. relates chiefly to the doctrines of Original Sin, and Redemption. In refuting the Socinian rejection of the former, the author is led to notice that mischievous principle introduced by their writers, that concupiscence has not in itself the nature of sin, p. 33. Compare also pp. 56, et seq. and the notes.

In the 3d part, treating of faith, and its objects, Christ and his redemption; the author shews, with great ability, that while the Socinian principles undermine the whole doctrine of Scripture, they are not less destructive to all the practical principles of Christianity, of which the Socinians pretend to be such zealous supporters, p. 152.

Part 4. treats of the general principles of reason and faith: the reasonableness of incomprehensible doctrines, &c. the paramount authority of Scripture is maintained, p. 70, &c.

In speaking of the Socinian mode of explaining away the assertion that the world was created by Christ, by interpreting it of the spiritual world and the regeneration of man, &c. the author takes occasion to point out the close resemblance between this mode of explanation, and that of the Quakers, fanatics, &c. (p. 171.) Thus, in fact, all the doctrines of the Bible might be destroyed, and their efficacy done away, if understood only of things within us.

The principles of interpretation, applied by the Romanists in explaining away many moral duties, and making out sins to be venial, are shewn by Dr. Edwards to be precisely the same as those on which the Socinians argue

against the truths of Scripture ; and that they are nearly allied to those of the Antinomians, enthusiasts, &c. (Part 4, p. 188, et seq.)

In a recent work by Dr. Miller of Dublin, entitled "Observations on the doctrines of Christianity," &c. the reader will find several comparisons ably instituted between the opposing extremes of error, and shewing their tendency to assimilate in some material points.

Thus [p. 7.] he points out that the rationalizing Arian and the mystical enthusiast, agree very closely in discarding the authority of any guide in their religious enquiries, besides the internal conviction or infatuation of their own minds.

Again, [p. 115.] he remarks the similarity of principle in some of the interpretations of the Romanists with those of the Socinians. "The Church of Rome," he observes, "contends that the expression 'This is my body,' cannot have any other than a literal signification : the adversaries of the atonement maintain that a scriptural expression, if not capable of being understood literally, cannot bear any signification important to our faith, and therefore deny that the death of Christ can have any sacrificial character at all."

The bad moral tendency of fanaticism is remarked, p. 122. : and a sort of assimilation between Calvinism and Arianism is pointed out, (p. 131.) in that the former tends to derogate from the importance of the office and person of God the Son.

Throughout this work there will also be found many remarks and arguments bearing on several of the topics here discussed.

It is somewhat curious, that while Socinians have accused our Church of being more than half Popish, the

Roman Catholics charge our clergy with Socinianism: whilst Protestant writers have shewn the close affinity between Roman Catholics and Socinians in some important points of doctrine. (Bp. Blomfield's Letter to Mr. Butler, note, p. 13.)

See also an old collection of tracts, entitled "A Preservative against Popery."

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION.

AMONG the writers of the school above alluded to as mixing up the truths of religion with those of philosophy, one of the first was the celebrated Leibnitz: his principal work, in which these speculations may be found, is entitled "*Discours de la conformité de la foi avec la raison*," it is comprized in the "*Essais de Theodicé*." See his Works, Duten's Ed. Vol. i. His disciple Wolf carried these principles to a much greater extent. A full exposition of his system is given in a work called "*Philosophiæ Leibnitzianæ et Wolfianæ usus in Theologiâ*," 1728. Of the application of mathematics a curious specimen is afforded in the work of Dr. Cheyne, called "*the Philosophical principles of religion, natural and revealed*," 1736. In the 2d part of this work the mathematical doctrine of infinities is applied to the mysteries of revelation. Bp. Berkley also, in his speculations, introduces continual comparisons between the mysteries of religion, and what he terms the mysteries of the new geometry. Some allusion to the same subject may be traced in Mr. Norris's "*Essay on Reason and Faith*:" in the concluding address to the Socinians. The German writers on this subject are, however, the most numerous. See Mr. Rose on the Protestantism of Germany, p. 39, and notes.

The philosophical pretensions of Unitarianism are such as must, to any competent judge, almost refute themselves. In order, however, to put their futility in the clearest light,

we have only to look at the names and pretensions, first, of those philosophers of whom, as partizans, the Unitarians *can* fairly boast: secondly, of those of whom they *would* boast if they could: and, thirdly, of some of whom they prudently *do not* pretend to boast. To the examination of these points I have directed some remarks and statements, which have appeared in some late numbers of the Christian Remembrancer. (See Nos. 81. 83. 86.) The cases of those philosophers whose names the Unitarians have tried to enlist on their side, were taken first in the order of discussion, in two letters to the Editor, entitled, "On the Charge of Heterodoxy brought against eminent Men." The cases adverted to are those of Newton and Locke: the first of these is referred to by Abp. Magee, Vol. iii. note, p. 343; and the second, in the same Vol. p. 115. Other instances of a similar kind are examined by the Archbishop, Vol. iii. notes pp. 48—58. and 341, &c. Some observations on both the former will also be found in Mr. Procter's Discourses, Edinb. 1824, notes, pp. 132. 134.

To my attempts by more detailed proofs, to vindicate those two illustrious philosophers from an imputation of Socinianism, and to shew that the Unitarian cause has no real ground for boasting of such powerful auxiliaries, I refer the reader for the details of the evidence collected from their works, and the arguments I have deduced from it.

I must, however, add one strong testimony from the writings of Newton, which I had overlooked when I drew up the paper alluded to. It is as follows:—In the commentary on the Apocalypse, referring to Rev. ii. 9. he says, "By the 'blasphemy of them which say that they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan,' I

understand the *idolatry* of the Nicolaitans, who falsely said that they were Christians."

Thus, to deny the Divinity of Christ was, in Newton's estimation, equivalent to blasphemy and idolatry, and excluded those who were guilty of so doing from the name of Christians.

The subject of Locke's opinions has been more canvassed than that of Newton's—and, in fact, the discrepancy between some of his tenets and those of the Church, is on all hands conceded. My remarks in the *Christian Remembrancer* were directed principally to shew, that as to the *principle* of his mode of interpretation, it was essentially different from, and completely hostile to, that of modern Unitarianism.

On this subject some remarks occur in a recent publication before referred to:—Mr. Rose (Prot. of Germany, notes, p. 176.) alludes to the reply of Mr. Belsham to the *Quarterly Review*, in the course of which some observations occur on the subject of Locke's opinions. Mr. B. accuses Locke of being an *Arian*: the reviewer had maintained that his *principles tended to Socinianism*. Archdeacon Balguy, who panegyricized Locke, describes him as interpreting the Epistles by his philosophy. I state these testimonies to shew, that, because Locke's peculiar views, *if carried a little further*, would have led to Socinian doctrines, it cannot by any means be inferred that the *principle* on which he went was at all the same as that on which the Socinians proceed: in short, if we were to concede that Socinian doctrines could be deduced from Locke's writings, still it does not at all follow that he set out upon any such extravagant principle as that of the modern Unitarians. But, I trust, that from the examination of Locke's writings it has sufficiently appeared that there is nothing

approaching to Socinianism in them; but on the contrary many express avowals directly hostile to such a supposition. The point in fact with which I am most concerned is the *principle* of his investigations. And I conceive it abundantly made out that Locke was in the strictest sense a *literalist* as contra-distinguished from a *rationalist*; and that the fault which marked his interpretation, and led to his errors, was that of taking *too confined a view of the literal import* of detached portions of Scripture.

In my remarks on the Unitarian accusations against these eminent men, I have commented briefly, but not at all in terms of sufficient severity, on the detestable principle of making out a writer's *disbelief* in any given doctrine, from his mere *omission* of it. To condemn a man for heterodoxy merely because he *does not obtrude* his orthodoxy; to denounce him as a *heretic* merely because he has *not occasion to profess his belief*; is a mode of proceeding which might indeed be well suited to the pene-tralia of the Inquisition, but comes with a very ill grace from the liberal and enlightened disciples of rationalism, the advocates of free enquiry. Yet in no instance has this disingenuous illiberality been more resorted to than in the attacks of Unitarians, and their perhaps unconscious allies in other quarters, upon the religious character of Newton, Locke, and other not less distinguished men.

Of this mode of arguing from *omission* almost the whole of the evidence against the philosophers in question is made up. It will be superfluous to cite particular instances: they may be found throughout all parts of the attacks on Locke: and many of them are sufficiently noticed in my letters on the subject.

And here I cannot help remarking how much injury is sometimes unconsciously done to the cause of truth and sound doctrine, by zealous but injudicious attempts to

detect fancied heterodoxy in the writings of eminent men. These imputations raised in a sincere spirit of zeal for the truth, are often ultimately most hostile to its interests; they strengthen the claim of the adverse party to the countenance of the writer so attacked, and transfer the weight of his reputation into the opposite scale. Whereas in cases like those now alluded to, the absolute want of evidence against him ought alone to be a sufficient consideration to deter any just and liberal examiner from exciting such unfavorable ideas.

Lastly, it may be observed that the philosophic fame of such men as those just spoken of, rests upon too secure a basis to be shaken by any assaults in the present times: but a charge of Unitarianism, if substantiated, against a minor philosopher, would do the Unitarian cause but little good; the charge itself being, in the eyes of all competent judges, so heavy an imputation on his *philosophic* fame as to render his name of no authority whatever.

Having thus alluded to one of the three classes of philosophers before pointed out, it remains to observe that the other two, viz., those of whom the Unitarians *can*, and those of whom they *do not* boast, have afforded matter for some remarks in my third paper above referred to. I have there considered the claims to scientific reputation of the great luminary of Socinianism: and remarked how totally destitute the cause seems to be of any really philosophical adherents besides. But in allusion to the character of Dr. Priestley, I will here give a more complete extract of a passage partially quoted in that paper; a testimony, which, as affording a fair estimate of his claim to philosophical distinction, will I conceive be readily admitted as coming from decisive authority; and in which certainly no hostility on religious grounds can be suspected,—the testimony of the late Professor Playfair:

“ On the whole from Dr. Priestley's conversation and from his writings, one is not much disposed to consider him as a person of first-rate abilities. The activity rather than the force of his genius is the object of admiration. He is indefatigable in making experiments, and he compensates by the number of them, for the unskilfulness with which they are often contrived, and the hastiness with which conclusions are drawn from them. Though little skilled in mathematics he has written on optics with tolerable success, and though but moderately versed in chemistry he has done very considerable service to that science.

“ If we view him as a critic, a metaphysician, and a divine, we must confine ourselves to more scanty praise. In his controversy with Dr. Reid though he has said many things that are true, he has shewn himself wholly incapable of understanding the principal point in debate; and when he has affirmed that the vague and unsatisfactory speculations of Hartley have thrown as much light on the nature of man, as the reasonings of Sir I. Newton did on the nature of body, he can scarcely be allowed to understand in what true philosophy consists. As to his theology, it is enough to say, that he denies the immateriality of the soul, though he contends for its immortality, and ranges himself on the side of Christianity. These inconsistencies and absurdities will perhaps deprive him of the name of a philosopher, but he will still merit the name of an useful and diligent experimenter.”—[Playfair's Works, Vol. i., Biog. Account, p. 87.]

Perhaps the main part of the substance of my remarks in this third paper may be recognized in the arguments of the present work. The statements of the religious opinions of all the most eminent philosophers, whom the Unitarians neither *can* nor *do* pretend to claim on their

side, I shall not here repeat—but at the same time must insert two of the testimonies of these great men in favour of that humility of mind which leads to a submissive reception of revealed truth.

One of these is that beautiful passage in Euler's Letters, where, in controversy with Newton, whom he considered greatly in the wrong on the point in dispute, he exclaims in the truest spirit of philosophy—

“Tous les jours que je vois de ces esprits forts, qui critiquent les vérités de notre religion; et s'en moquent même avec la plus impertinente suffisance, je pense, chetifs mortels! Combien et combien des choses sur lesquelles vous raisonnez si légèrement sont elles plus sublimes, et plus élevées que celles sur lesquelles le grand Newton s'égare si grossièrement!”

The other is a declaration still stronger, and which is extremely valuable, as coming from a philosopher who perhaps more than any other was addicted to theorize upon all subjects—the celebrated Des. Cartes.

“Credenda esse omnia quæ a Deo revelata sunt; quamvis captum nostrum excedant.” “Ita si forte nobis Deus de Scipso, vel aliis aliquid revelet, quod naturales ingenii nostri vires excedent, qualia jam sunt mysteria Incarnationis et Trinitatis, non recusabimus illa credere quamvis non dare intelligamus. Nec ullo modo mirabimur multa esse, tum in immensâ ejus naturâ, tum etiam in rebus ab eo creatis, quæ captum nostrum excedant.”—Cartesius. Princip. Philos. p. 7.

Without in the smallest degree meaning to speak in terms other than those of general condemnation of the speculations on religious subjects, of the philosopher of Malmesbury, I cannot forbear giving here the following extracts from his life. They afford a curious testimony; which however inconsistent with some of his other tenets,

will shew that at least at some periods of his life, his views of religion were such as completely to discountenance the philosophical pretensions of the system which seeks to comprehend Divine mysteries, and adopts a standard of truth distinct from Scripture. These extracts will require no comment.

(Bayle's Historical and Critical Dictionary improved, Crit. Hobbes. p. 188, note).

"Deum agnovit eumque rerum omnium originem intra angustos tamen humanæ rationis cancellos nallatenus circumscribendum." Vita Hobbes. ii. p. 105.

"Religionem Christianum quatenus in Ecclesia Anglicana, resectis superstitionibus ineptiis, regni legibus stabilitur ex animo amplexus est." (106).

His attachment to the Church of England was shewn in his joining a private congregation of its members during the civil war, with whom he received the communion. (29.)

"Quicquid autem ad pietatis exercitia aut bonos mores conferret plurimi fecit. Sanctius illi et reverentius visum de Deo credere quam scire. Sacerdotes interim inculpare solitus est qui Christianam Religionem absolutam ac simplicem, vel superstitione macularent, vel inanibus interdum profanis speculationibus implicarent." (107).

"Quare fortiter calumniati sunt qui ipsum Atheismi reum detulerunt: quod inde forsitan profectum quia scholasticorum aliorumque iste de grege morem rejecerat, qui otiosi in Musæis suis sedentes, juxta imbecilem ingenii sui captum, naturæ Divinæ incomperta affingunt attributa." Ibid.

A remarkable instance of his devotion is recorded in the note, p. 189.

From his work, entitled "Humane Nature," copious extracts are given in the notes to the same article.

Among these (note, p. 191), his opinions on religion are very fully stated. He maintains the absolute incomprehensibility of the Deity; whilst his existence is certain, he insists with great particularity on that fundamental truth of the Gospel, "That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh *." And again, "Seeing our faith, that the Scriptures are the word of God, began from the confidence and trust we repose in the Church, there can be no doubt but that their interpretation of the same Scriptures, when any doubt or controversy shall arise, by which this fundamental truth that 'Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,' may be called in question, is safer for any man to trust to than his own whether reasoning or spirit, that is to say, his own opinion." (Note, p. 192.)

I will close these extracts by one or two from the highest philosophical authority, that of Lord Bacon. They bear directly upon the design of the present work: they display the sentiments of a man never surpassed in greatness of comprehension and elevation of views; and they contain the testimony of his philosophy to the necessity and reasonableness of taking Scripture as our only guide to religious truth, and implicitly resigning the vain authority of the human imagination in matters of faith.

"Nam theologia naturalis, philosophia etiam Divina recte appellatur. Diffinitur autem hæc, ut sit talis scientia, seu potius scientiæ scintilla, qualis de Deo haberi potest per lumen naturæ, et contemplationem rerum creaturarum; et ratione objecti, sane Divina, ratione informationis, naturalis censi potest. Hujus scientiæ limites ita vere signantur, ut ad Atheismum confutandum et convincendum, et ad legem naturæ informandam, se extendant; *ad religionem autem astruendam non proferantur.* Quamo-

* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

brem nec Deus unquam edidit miraculum quo converteretur Atheus; quia poterat ipso naturæ lumine ad notitiam Dei perducere: verum miracula ad convertendos idolatras et superstitiosos designata sunt, qui numen agnoverunt, sed in cultu ejus aberrarunt; quoniam non sufficit lumen naturæ Dei voluntati declarandæ, aut cultui ejus legitimo prodendo..... &c.

..... Verum ex intuitu rerum naturalium atque humanæ rationis principiis, *de Fidei mysteriis* vel *ratiocinari*, vel etiam suadere vehementius; aut rursus ea curiosius introspicere, et ventilare, et de modo mysterii inquirere; *haud tutum* meo judicio fuerit. *Da Fidei quæ Fidei sunt.* Nam vel Ethnici, in illustri illâ et Divina, de aurea catena, fabula hoc ipsum concedunt, quod Jovem de cœlo ad terras deducere nec homines potuerunt, me Dii: e contrario, quod Jupiter pertrahere eos potuerit e terra ad cœlum. Quare *frustra sudaverit, qui cœlestia religionis Arcana nostræ rationi adaptare conabitur*: Decebit potius mentes nostras ad cœlestis veritatis thronum adorandum attollere. In hac igitur parte Theologiæ Naturalis tantum abest ut defectum aliquem observem, ut excessum potius reperiam; ad quem subnotandum paulum sum digressus, propter maxima *incommoda* et pericula quæ ex eo *tum religioni, tum philosophiæ* impendent; utpote qui et *religionem hæreticam* producet, et *philosophiam phantasticam* et superstitiosam."

De Augment. Scient. Lib. 3. cap. 2. p. 141, 142. Fol. 1623.

Prærogativa Dei totum hominem complectitur; nec minus ad rationem quam ad voluntatem humanam, extenditur: ut homo scilicet, in universum se abneget, et accedat Deo. Quare, sicut legi Divinæ obedire tenemur, licet reluctetur voluntas; ita et verbo Dei fidem habere, licet reluctetur ratio. Etenim *si ea duntaxat credamus*

quæ sunt rationi nostræ consentanea, REBUS assentimur NON AUCTORI: quod etiam suspectæ fidei testibus præstare solemus. At Fides illa quæ Abrahamo imputabatur ad justitiam, de hujusmodi re-existit, quam irrisui habebat Sarah: quæ in hac parte imago quædam erat rationis naturalis. Quanto igitur mysterium aliquod Divinum, fuerit magis absonum et incredibile, tanto plus in *credendo* exhibetur honoris Deo, et fit victoria Fidei nobilior. Etiam et peccatores quo magis conscientia sua gravantur, et nihilominus fidem de salute sua in Dei misericordia collocant, eo Deum majore afficiunt honore: omnis autem desperatio Deo pro contumelia est. Quinctiam si attente rem perpendamus *dignius quiddam est credere quam scire*; qualiter nunc scimus. In scientia enim, mens humana patitur a sensu, qui a rebus materiatis resilit: in fide autem anima patitur ab anima; quæ est agens dignius. Aliter se res habet in statu gloriæ: tunc siquidem cessabit fides, atque cognoscemus, sicut et cogniti sumus.

Concludamus igitur theologiam sacram ex verbo et oraculis Dei non ex lumine naturæ, aut rationis dictamine hauriri debere. Scriptum est enim, cœli enarrant gloriam Dei: at nusquam Scriptum invenitur, cœli enarrant voluntatem Dei. De illa pronuntiatur, "ad legem et testimonia si non fecerint secundum verbum istud, &c.: neque hoc tenet tantum in grandibus illis mysteriis, de Deitate, creatione, redemptione; rerum pertinet etiam ad interpretationem perfectiorem legis moralis, &c. Lib. 9. cap. i. p. 480.

..... Quare religio, sive mysteria spectes, sive mores, *pendet ex revelatione Divina.*

Attamen usus rationis humanæ in spiritualibus multiplex sane existit, ac latè admodum patet. Neque enim sine causa est, quod apostolus religionem appellaverit rationalem cultum Dei. Recordetur quis cærimonias et

typos veteris legis : fuerunt illæ rationales et significativæ longe discrepantes a cæremoniis idolatriæ et magiæ ; quæ tanquam surdæ et mutæ erant, nihil docentes plerunque, imo ne innuentes quidem. Præcipue Christiana Fides, ut in omnibus sic in hoc ipso eminet, quod auream servet mediocritatem, circa usum rationis et disputationis, (quæ rationis proles est) inter leges Ethnicorum et Mahometi, quæ extrema sectantur. Religio siquidem Ethnicorum, Fidei aut confessionis constantis nihil habebat : contra in religione Mahometi, omnis disputatio interdicta est : ita ut altera, erroris vagi et multiplicis ; altera vafre cujusdam et cautæ imposturæ faciem præ se ferat ; cum sancta Fides Christiana rationis usum, et disputationem (sed secundum debitos fines) et recipiat et rejiciat." (P. 482.)

Quod ad mysteriorum explicationem attinet, videmus non dedignari Deum ad infirmitatem captus nostri se demittere ; mysteria sua ita explicando, ut a nobis optime ea possint percipi ; atque revelationes suas in rationis nostræ syllepses et notiones veluti inoculando ; atque inspirationes ad intellectum nostrum aperiendum sic accommodando quemadmodum figura clavis aptatur figuræ seræ. Quâ tamen in parte nobis ipsis deesse minime debemus : cum enim Deus ipse opera rationis nostræ in illuminationibus suis utatur, etiam nos eandem in omnes partes versare debemus, quo magis capaces simus ad mysteria recipienda et imbibenda : modo animus ad amplitudinem mysteriorum pro modulo suo dilatetur ; non mysteria ad angustias animi constringantur." (P. 483).

Itaque nobis res salubris videtur et imprimis utilis, si tractatus instituatur sobrius et diligens, qui de *usu rationis humanæ* in theologicis utiliter præcipiat, tanquam Divina quædam dialectica. Utpote quæ futura sit instar opiatæ cujusdam medicinæ ; quæ non modo speculationum qui-

bus schola interdum laborat, inania consopiat; verum etiam controversiarum furōres, quæ in ecclesia tumultus cient, nonnihil mitiget. Ejusmodi tractatum inter desiderata ponimus; et sophronem sive de legitimo usu rationis humanæ in Divinis nominamus. (P. 484.)

..... Quemadmodum enim theologiam in philosophia quærere perinde est ac si vivos quæras inter mortuos: ita e contra philosophiam in theologia quærere non aliud est quam mortuos quærere inter vivos. (P. 487.)

FINIS.





